石踏一榮
ICHIEI ISHIBUMI
19
ハイスクールD×D
総選挙のデュランダル
ファンタジア文庫

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「さて、ひとつ景気よくいこうかな」
「――ッッ！
お、お、おおおおおおおおおお
おまえなっ！」
ゼノヴィアは自分の唇を指でなぞりながら、楽しそうに吹きだした。
「ふふっ、隙だらけだったぞ、イッセー。
そんなわけで会長当選祈願というわけでひとついただいた」

Rias Gremory Rias Gremory Rias Gremory Rias Gremory Rias Gremory Rias Gremory
Rias
Gremory

Rudra

I — Azazel am currently in the remote countryside of a certain country.

At the end of the year, I was at a certain small stream holding something like a fishing rod. ……Although I do enjoy fishing…even I don't feel like fishing right now.

The reason — is here.

Sitting next to me and holding a fishing rod was a boy who had a slight smile on his face. His hair was green and black, roughly fourteen to fifteen years old, had normal features but was a handsome boy—.

"……You don't like fishing?"

The boy asked me.

"……Not really, though in the past I did spend a few years on it."

That was a lie. Fallen Angels have an eternal life, there was a period when I spent a lot of my time trying to practice and gain experience in fishing.

Hearing my response, the boy made a bitter smile

"Eh, my enthusiasm has already faded. But, a long time ago I once did have enthusiasm…"

After that brief conversation, it was silent again.

……I'd already kept this up for a few hours now. Seeing as so much time has been spent on this, there should be at least some results from fishing…. Unfortunately though, there are no fish in this stream. Even so, the boy still seemed interested in fishing here.

The boy suddenly broke the silence and said

"Known as the most sinister of all Fallen Angels, you are also their leader, yet you actually try to spread peace around the world. This is such a joke. If Indra knew about this he would surely be laughing. ……Or would he smile and say something?"

Then I asked the boy about my main concern

"There's only one thing I wish to ask you. After it happens, can you please stop the beast?"

Hearing this, the boy looked surprised.

"666. Is that all right? Isn't it a divine beast from your mythology?"

"The only one who can stop him now is you."

After I said that, the boy smirked and replied

"Ophis is not here. Great Red naturally won't accept. …the only one left then is me."

The boy smiled wryly at me, then asked

"I heard that one of the young dragons on your side is able to communicate?"

"…Even if it was possible I don't want to use it. As I don't know what will happen."

"A difficult request with unreasonable conditions. This isn't really negotiating."

……I understand. In my position, this boy…… this god is not a person like me. I understood this but still came to ask him.

"If there is anything that you want, as long as it is within my power, whatever it is I'll satisfy your request. If necessary, I'll go and ask

Odin and Zeus. Even my life doesn't matter, I'd give it to you. I only need to stop the destruction of this world. Only this."

Hearing my words, the boy laughed loudly.

"Ahahaha, hearing such contradiction''' is too interesting!"

—But then the boy spoke in a direct manner

"—There's no need. Whether it's Odin or Zeus, or your life, I have no interest in it. If there was something I did want it would be — Ophis. Or rare cases like Sirzechs Lucifer, Ajuka Beelzebub as well. I want these people who can pose a threat to me, Fallen Angel-san."

What this god said, I…… didn't know how to respond. After assessing my reaction, the boy showed a mischievous smile.

"I was joking. An incomplete Ophis or a devil who has no will to fight, does not make me interested."

The boy said as he got up.

"—Then I'll do it. Fight with this beast, if he wants to invade another world, I will stop it. —But everything else is just an interference. Whether it's something that's happening now, or something that will happen in the future, it has nothing to do with me. Even if it's Rizevim Livan Lucifer or the Evil Dragons. I will only lend you a hand if worst comes to worst. ……Are you satisfied with that?"

……That's enough. That's already more than enough. In the chance that the worst case scenario does comes true, there'll be insurance — from this god.

If he's willing to lend even a bit of his strength, then no matter what kind of help it would be highly appreciated.

"…Yes, that makes me feel at ease. I sincerely thank you—"

"There is no need. This was my original mission. —To destroy everything."

The one who interrupted me, was that boy — from the stream which shouldn't even have a single fish, he reeled in a massive fish which

radiated a divine splendour.

……Could this god see something that even my eyes couldn't see?

However, this is not surprising. The atmosphere that this god exudes — makes me feel some kind of immeasurable power.

"I understand. I won't have any more doubts about you. —God of Destruction Shiva."

This boy — the God of Destruction showed an eloquent smile.

Considering the worst case scenario, the representatives here were Shemhaza and I, Sirzechs, and Michael who would make an immense deal for this 'insurance'.

"We will need a sufficiently strong 'backing'. Though Odin and Zeus are already very powerful. Considering the worst possible situation — Trihexa revives, defeats Great Red, and all our forces are also slightly decreased."

"So, Azazel…… you want it?"

"……That's right, Michael. If the worst case scenario becomes a reality, we need people who are able to stop it. The only one who can do it right now is—Sirzechs, you know right?"

"Are you talking about the God of Destruction Shiva?"

If nobody is able to control Great Red during the battle, and Ophis's power has weakened a lot, then there is no one who can stop Rizevim's plan to revive Trihexa and also the Evil Dragons. Although there may be hope if all the forces are united…but as a result, the God-class people of each mythology will have to make some sacrifices. If even one of the Gods with responsibility over the human world went missing, the consequences on the world would be hard to imagine.

In that case, the power to defeat Qlippoth is still necessary. The destructive power of certain people. —If I had to list a person with whom I was very close to, then it would be — Shiva.

Although there are still many uncertain points, by providing all the

information and conditions that we had to offer, he finally agreed. The results of this can't be ignored. The aftermath of this matter was entrusted to Shiva. This might at least be able to avoid the worst case scenario—.

Shiva used one finger to touch the large fish he had caught. After that, the struggling fish calmed down.

Shiva said to me

"—Azazel, you've shown me your will to die. You'd best be careful. A man who preaches peace is always an unsightly existence. Yet you've come here to speak to me about ill omens. Your talents are quite impressive."

……I'm well aware of the risks. Nevertheless, I want to do everything within my power. ……Eh, not too long ago, this would've been dangerous, I still committed a taboo…….

"If you really believe in that faith, even Fallen Angels are able to reincarnate right?"

I asked wryly, and Shiva simply shrugged.

For the wages of sin is death — The Bible <<Romans 6:23>>

Notes

1. The boy mentioned that Azazel who was the leader of the Fallen Angels is supposed to be evil and sinister thus he finds it amusing that Azazel is begging so desperately.

Life.0

— New Year's Day.

Including me, Hyoudou Issei, all the members of the Occult Research Club celebrated the New Year, then after deciding on which places to go to, we set out early in the morning.

And our destination was—.

"Ise! Long time no see!"

A girl with blonde hair and a tail — Kunou appeared in front of the Torii [1][1] of the shrine. That's right, this New Year we came to visit Kyoto — Fushimi Inari Taisha [1][2]. Because it was the New Year, everyone was worried that it would be crowded, so we used a magic circle to teleport here in an instant. Um, the number of Torii here is still the same which feels quite scary [1][3]. In order not be disturbed by other people, Kunou and I had set up a barrier with the effect of keeping people away.

"Hey—, Kunou. I came here to pay my respects."

"Uh-huh! Here's the main god, the god Ukanomitama [1][4] will definitely be happy."

After paying our respects, a friendly onee-san with the appearance of a fox appeared from inside the shrine! This lovely nine-tailed fox was the leader of the youkai in Kyoto—.

“Everyone who has travelled so far to visit, welcome.”

It was Kunou’s mother Yasaka-san! Mmm—, indeed, she’s so beautiful! Her oppai are so large that I can’t help looking! It’s been a treat for my eyes since the New Year started. It just makes me want to bow down and pray.

After Yasaka-san greeted us, Rias sincerely greeted her

“I had, always wanted the chance to greet you. But due to various reasons, I never had the chance, so I took the opportunity to greet you during this New Year’s visit.”[151]

Rias was currently wearing a long-sleeved kimono! Her long crimson hair was tied together, and she gave off an elegant atmosphere. Not only Rias, but Asia, Akeno-san, Koneko-chan, Irina, Rosseweisse-san, and Ravel were also wearing long-sleeved kimonos. By the way, Gya-suke was also dressed like them….

Me, Kiba and Xenovia were dressed normally. The three of us had agreed.

“”””Going to Fushimi Inari? It would be best to wear clothing which is easier to walk in.”””

This answer was very much like the style of a front-line soldier. After all, speaking of Fushimi Inari Taisha, it was almost like mountain hiking.

Originally I was going to invite Azazel-sensei, Kuroka and Le Fay to come along as well, but sensei said that he had to meet with several important people and thus couldn’t come. Kuroka was sitting under a warm table in the Hyoudou household early in the morning of the New Year, eating rice cakes and mandarins to enjoy her leisurely life. Le Fay was accompanying (or said she was being held with) her.

Sensei later sent us some pictures, when he was drunk, where Azazel-sensei with a naked upper body was dancing with Zeus from Olympus, as well as an extremely hilarious scene of Michael-san, along with the God of the North Odin-oyaji [161] who was given a

beating when he extended his hand towards Serafall Leviathan's behind, and also dressed up as Satan Red was Sirzechs-sama who was being scolded by a drunk Grayfia-san. A luxury gathering on New Year's Day, scenes which were not normally seen were sent one after the other to us. It was simply too incredible. These things were definitely not the respectful images of God-class people that were normally seen…. And Rias had her hand over her forehead, with a complicated expression for the New Year….

However, seeing Grayfia-san being amidst those people, I felt relieved. Although it looked like a drunken mess, it showed me that she had at least recovered a bit and was back to being somewhat more relaxed.

"…It seems it was Azazel and the other Gods who invited her. He said that it was that time of year, so they needed to celebrate the New Year, which really helped out my sister-in-law."

After saying that, Rias seemed relieved. She had been worried about Grayfia-san's situation from the bottom of her heart. After all, although Grayfia-san's younger brother was still alive, it had provoked a lot of unrest in the underworld.

"Uh-huh, I will do my best to welcome you!"

Kunou looked very happy. She had also visited the Hyoudou household before…. That was when she was called to discuss the matters relating to the shrine and met Phis [171].

"Phis didn't come?"

Kunou looked around at the people who were here. Phis [181] — that was Ophis. Because of their meeting, they had developed a good relationship. As we couldn't explain Ophis's body, I had introduced her as a young dragon girl named 'Phis'.

I scratched my cheek, then immediately started thinking of an excuse.

"Ah…. Ah that's right, Phis said that she should stay home…she has a cold. So she's resting. She really wanted to see Kunou though."

After all, we couldn't bring Ophis out. Right now she was probably with Kuroka and Le Fay playing games. Kunou seemed a little disheartened after hearing this, but she quickly regained her spirits.

"I heard that a dragon's cold is quite troublesome. I'll go and prepare a special Kyoto remedy, just wait a moment!"

With that said, Kunou quickly ran off towards the shrine. …She was probably going home to get the medicine right? She really thought of Ophis as her friend. That was a rather good thing.

Seeing Kunou, Yasaka-san showed a pleased smile.

"Ufufu, Sekiryuutei-sama, you seem to have got closer to my Kunou, which is quite fortunate."

"No, no, that's not it. Back then, it was just a courtesy for us to take care of your child, as you helped us out during the crisis in the Underworld."

After all, Yasaka-san helped us out when the Underworld was going through a crisis. She made an alluring smile — then leaned in next to my ear! …The fragrance which made its way into my nostrils was something out of this world…! H-How did t-this fragrance make my mind so excited that I was paralysed…I-Is this, what they call, the fragrant charm of a mature woman…!?

"Sekiryuutei-sama, for the time being, can you wait until Kunou grows into an adult? If you can't wait, you could have me live with you…. Ufufufu. After all, Kunou once pestered me about having brothers and sisters. Not to mention that I haven't had a young man's bare skin for a while…."

Yasaka-san's slender and delicate white fingers slid across my chin…! Her attractive gaze and provocative voice stimulated my male instinct—. It was only the beginning of the New Year and this onee-san had already captivated me!

However, Kunou had returned quickly and interjected

"Okaa-sama [191]! Your joke has gone too far! I got him first!"

Kunou tightly hugged onto my leg. Her extremely cute expression was meant to deter Yasaka-san.

“Hahaha. Truly an obsessive child. At this age you have some ‘feminine’ charm. Perhaps there’s some resemblance to being a

woman.”

Seeing her daughter’s actions, Yasaka-san showed a calm smile.

“…Even in Kyoto I can’t stay relaxed.”

Next to me, Rias sighed. —Then, Yasaka-san clapped her hands together, and asked Rias

“Gossip aside, Sekiryuutei’s legal wife-sama, about the previous matter, do you have an answer?”

“Yes, there is no reason for me to refuse it.”

I asked Rias who was smiling as she replied

“…W-W-What happened?”

“Oh, Kunou will be starting middle school at Kuoh Academy in the coming year. The preparations have already been made.”

—!? The sudden news left me at a loss for words! It was too unbelievable! It was so unexpected, that something like would happen!

Seeing me surprised and speechless, Kunou proudly raised her arm and said

“Ahem, it’s about time for me to go to learn about the human world. You could say that I want to go to a school which doesn’t have any problems for youkai! So after asking mother, then I just had to ask the legal wife Rias-sama!”

That is to say, Kunou will be coming to Kuoh Academy this spring. After all, the school had many people secretly studying there. From youkai to devils, there were all sorts of people. The most special people were probably the Occult Research Club and the Student Council’s members. Not only were there devils, there were also angels, youkai, Valkyrie, a werewolf and even a female grim reaper showed up….

…In true spirit of the New Year, it looks like there will be a lot of new things happening. …Which also means an approaching departure.

Rias and Akeno-san, will be graduating in around two months…. New people arriving, also means their predecessors will be departing. Although this is the natural course of things, I don't look forward to it and it's only the first month of the year.

"Yes, O…phis will be very happy."

I should tell Ophis when we get back. While her face will certainly remain emotionless, she'll definitely be happy on the inside.

"Uh-huh! I look forward to seeing Phis again!"

After Kunou's enthusiastic reply, I released the barrier and returned to normal space. We began climbing towards the top of Fushimi Inari Taisha again.

After reaching halfway, we saw some familiar faces in Kyoto.

"Ara ara, Rias, you finally came here as well."

It was Sona-kaichou and her household! Those girls were also wearing long-sleeved kimonos. …But only the Grim Reaper girl Bennia was wearing a jacket.

"You know, Sona. I heard you were coming to Kyoto, but I didn't imagine that I'd meet you here."

Rias had encountered a good friend early in the New Year, and those two stood there while talking.

"It looks like they got here about ten minutes before the Gremory household."

Kunou said. I see, so they got here just a bit earlier than us.

"Yo, Ise."

Saji greeted me.

"Yo, Saji. Happy New Year. You also came here to pray for the New Year?"

"Ah, it's great fun. Fushimi Inari Taisha is our fourth stop, after that we plan on going to two other places before heading back. A part of

the New Year means us devils coming out, which is well deserved."

As he said, Kyoto is a sightseeing spot for devils during part of the New Year — especially the devils who are part of 'DxD' as many places open up to them. The Gods that each shrine is dedicated to expressed their consent. Because of this, even though it's not the school excursion, we were still able to come here.

Then again, the Sitri group also came to Kyoto during the New Year for some sightseeing. This isn't too bad. We planned to quietly celebrate the New Year at the Hyoudou home after we got back from our trip.

"What, you're going to wish to be elected Vice-President?"

Hearing me joke about him, Saji laughed.

Suddenly glancing over, Xenovia and the Sitri group's [Bishop] Momo Hanakai-san were staring. Between those two seemed to be a silent tension. This was inevitable. After all, they were competing for the position of Student Council President, in other words, rivals.

"I won't lose to you, Xenovia-san"

"Ah, Momo. I also, will definitely win."

The two were shaking hands. Hmm, a declaration of rivalry is fine. It felt like they were full of competitive spirit. But speaking of that, Xenovia, when did she start calling Hanakai-san by her given name…? It seems like the Gremory and Sitri girls frequently spoke to each other, when the boys didn't even know about it.

Hearing the conversation of the two girls, Saji shrugged.

"So on my side, besides me; the others are here to pray for the election. Well, if the Gods here really do show compassion to devils, then we need to thank them. See you, I need to head back down now."

After that, the Sitri group began walking down the hill. There were people besides Saji and Hanakai-san who also wanted to be elected in the Student Council. But they didn't have much chance, so the

election would definitely be able to determine…. In other words, the closest competition in the Student Council election, would be between Xenovia and Hanakai-san for the position of President.

Next, we should also continue heading up towards the top of the shrine.

—Just as I was about to start walking, someone hugged onto my arm. It was Irina. It looked like she was in a very good mood, so much so that she was even humming a tune.

“Hum, Kyoto at this time of year is really nice. Darling ♪”

…D-Darling. …That’s right, since the beginning of winter, Irina’s attitude towards me has completely changed, sometimes she would call me ‘Darling ♪’ and she became even more clingy than before! She suddenly started learning how to cook, she planned to take baths with me, and if there was any opportunity, she would sneak into my bed at night! A-Although it made me happy, it made me feel even more troubled. Everything else aside, just ‘Darling’ alone was enough to make my entire body go numb!

“…S-Say, Irina.”

“What is it ~, Darling?”

Irina’s voice was sweet. …Her voice made me hesitate on how I should respond.

“Why…why have you recently started calling me ‘Darling’?”

I worked up the courage to ask. I wanted to confirm it.

“Annoying. You certainly are, Ise-kun. Hee hee ♪”

Hee hee ♪—was what she said! I roughly understand…that I’ve become ‘Darling’?

“Just calling me Ise normally is fine. Otherwise, it feels like my brain will melt…”

Because my mind really will melt so I hope that she can stop. ‘Darling’ is just too nauseating. It already no longer has the same

meaning as before….

I carefully but clearly told her. Whereas Irina looked like — she had been struck down, her expression could immediately be seen.

“H-How can you…How could Ise-kun say that…! And when I kissed you was it just for fun!?”

Why would she bring that up! Why would you say that here!? Everyone around here were just ordinary people headed to the shrine!?

“Hey, hey. You don’t need to say that so loudly!”

I nervously tried to calm Irina down, next to me Xenovia sighed while saying

“Irina, just a kiss has turned you into a lover, you’re too impatient. After all, Rias-zenbuchou [101] and Asia have already kissed Ise, and they did it more passionately than compared to Irina.”

Xenovia said tiredly in response to her friend.

Uh, ah, Irina and I kissed on Christmas…. It was after that that Irina’s attitude changed. What can I say, it seemed like she was always staring at me with an affectionate gaze.

But Irina didn’t continue her frustration, and instead made a stance to pray.

“I don’t care! The forbidden love between Ise-kun and I will continue! Even if there’s an obstacle between us, there’ll be no problems as long as we have love!”

U-Uh, even her eyes were sparkling…! It was just the beginning of the year and things were already in full swing.

“That reminds me, I haven’t prayed yet.”

“Ah, I as well.”

“““Ah, dear Lord.”””

Xenovia and Irina as well as Asia, those three began praying!

“What a devoted prayer! I also need to try!”

“Hahaha, everyone is rather interesting. Also…”

Even Kunou and Yasaka-san started copying the Church trio!

…Why did this happen at Fushimi Inari Taisha during the New Year…? I simply couldn’t understand.

These trivial things continued as we went on, and I finally reached the shrine at the summit, where I then put my hands together to make a wish.

My wish is…for everyone to be healthy! That was first! Then I want to be able to make my harem in peace! That was very, very important! The third is ecchi! I hope that this year I’ll be able to encounter many ecchi pleasures! If a few of my wishes could be granted then that would be the best!

Next to me, the sound of talking and praying wafted into my ears.

“…When you wish, you need to give your own address and given name clearly to the God, wouldn’t that be better? Do you understand, Gya-kun?”

“Eh?! I-I didn’t know Koneko-chan! N-Need to do it again!”

After being asked by Koneko-chan, Gya-suke hurriedly started wishing for the second time.

“Oh well, Gya-suke. The shrines have several different factions, this one is Inari 「」 focused, so it’s best to make a related wish. But, I will probably come here during my school trip in autumn, so I can make another wish then.”

“Ah, I’m really looking forward to the school trip! Although Kyoto in winter is nice, I also want to have a good tour of Kyoto during autumn!”

Ravel exclaimed, with both her eyes sparkling.

That’s right. Koneko-chan, Gasper and Ravel will be second year

students starting this spring, and they have a school trip during autumn. How scary, they'll be going to Kyoto just like Rias and I did. …Although they probably won't be attacked like I was….

"I made a wish, I hope that Fafnir-san can recover quickly."

Asia said Fafnir fought with the determination to die for the sake of protecting Asia against Rizevim, after exhausting all his power, he entered a state of temporary hibernation. …He showed a dragon's 'Outrage'—. When he put all his effort into protecting the people important to him, that sight has already been engraved into my mind. Recover quickly, Golden Dragon King.

Even you, are an important partner to me. My eyes suddenly focused to the side, where Xenovia was praying.

"What did you wish for?"

Xenovia kept her eyes closed, and replied

"…This year, I will definitely have Ise's children."

"H-Hey! Wishing to have a baby will not come true! Anyway, what is your wish…?"

Seeing my expression, Xenovia laughed.

"Hahaha, I was half-joking. —Ah, I was hoping to have a smooth election. Even though I'm not sure if this God will grant the wishes of a devil."

Well at this time, it's only natural for her to wish for this.

"Still, you do want to win with your own strength right?"

Hearing my words, Xenovia smiled confidently.

"Of course. Victory or defeat, it's only meaningful if you put in your best effort."

Her face showed an expression of determination.

Incredible! Such an admirable expression. Xenovia was planning to go all out for the Student Council elections from the start of the New

Year. This was the usual Xenovia who feared nothing!

After praying, Xenovia turned to me — and suddenly grabbed my face with both her hands!

“Well, give me good luck.”

Then, her face leaned closer to mine — and our lips overlapped with each other Aaaaaaaaaaaahhhhhhhhhhhh!? It was such an unexpected development, which made me too surprised, and I subconsciously stepped back! B-B-B-B-Be-Because! S-Suddenly it became like this! So suddenly — she just kissed me!

Everyone else was also startled and astonished by it!

“—! W-W-W-W-W-W-W-W-Wh-Wh-Wh-What did you do!”

I completely panicked! I was certain that my face was completely red!

Xenovia slid her finger over her lips, and laughed with amusement.

“Haha, it looks like you have many weaknesses, Ise. For my wish to be elected president to come true, I’ll accept that kiss.”

…Using a kiss to make a wish! What is this! Really! The New Year had just begun and this had happened…! Did the wish I just made take effect this quickly?! I should first thank the God here, right?! No, I hope that I’ll have an even more passionate and romantic kiss! Ah, although the surprise was very much like Xenovia’s style!

“Irina, how does it feel? I should also try calling Ise ‘Darling’.”

Xenovia made a ‘V’-sign [121] at Irina.

“Uwaahhh!”

Irina’s eyes were full of tears and she frowned all of a sudden!

From behind her, Rias’s sigh could be heard followed by Akeno-san’s voice.

“…Now, it looks like it won’t be as easy as last year.”

“Ara, let’s hope you can take the lead from the other girls, I’m looking forward to it, you know?”

Just like this, with a New Year — the third trimester was about to begin!

Notes

1. Torii: Traditional Japanese gate usually situated near the entrance to a shrine.

2. Fushimi Inari Taisha: Head shrine of the god Inari, in Fushimi-ku, Kyoto.

3. Fushimi Inari Taisha has many Torii lined up leading to the inner shrine.

4. Ukanomitama is a kami associated with agriculture and sometimes with Inari, the kami of foxes.

5. This is called Hatsumōde, where people visit shrines during the first few days of the New Year to make wishes for the that year and other such things.

6. Oyaji: Old man.

7. This is referring to events in the short story “*Worship☆Dragon-God Girl*”

8. Kunou has shortened Ophis’s name to “フィス”. Ophis’s full name is “オーフィス”. This takes out the ‘O’ sound leaving just ‘fisu’.

9. Okaa-sama: Respectful way of addressing one’s mother.

10. –zenbuchou: - former buchou.

11. Inari: Inari Okami is the Japanese kami of foxes, of fertility, rice, tea and Sake, of agriculture and industry, of general prosperity and worldly success.

12. V-sign: ‘peace’ sign using two fingers.

Life.1
Third Trimester Starts!

Part 1

The winter break came to an end, and Kuoh Academy entered the third trimester.

Besides the third year students who have more freedom, the first and second year students continued as usual as they had to attend school every day. Because today was a half-holiday, after roll call and the opening ceremony, it was time for club activities.

It was the important first day for the Occult Research Club to begin working under the new arrangement! The first years and second years were also gathered in the club room, around the new President to decide on the club activities.

After Ravel took the tea which was prepared (Akeno-san who took care of this before had passed the duty on to Ravel) and served it to everyone, the meeting began.

…But, there was a sudden silence between everyone. It became like this, because our new President had absolutely no idea where to begin.

I wondered and asked the new Buchou Asia

“Buchou, what are we going to do for the third semester’s

activities?”

“……”

And Asia — seemed like she didn’t expect her name to be called, and glanced around.

“Buchou, Asia-buchou—”

I sighed, then called out to her again. Then, Asia seemed like she finally realised, and got up in a panic.

“Ah, yes! S-Sorry! Because I didn’t think you were calling me…”

…Hmm, that was said with Asia’s style, or should I say that it was very innocent and pure. Everyone showed an understanding smile towards her.

“Well, it is only the beginning.”

I said as I scratched my cheek. The first day. Regardless, it’s just changed too much.

The new Fukubuchou Kiba also agreed.

“Well said. Because Rias-zenbuchou is no longer here, it probably feels quite hard to understand the new environment. We’ll get used to it little by little. First, why don’t we all write down our ambitions, that would be nice.”

Calligraphy. This new style of things isn’t bad. It’s something the previous Occult Research Club probably wouldn’t do. It’s necessary to try new things.

“Speaking of which, where are Rias and Akeno-san?”

I asked. After leaving the club, it felt a bit lonely without those two around, it was still quite unbelievable.

“…Those two said that they might come over if they’re interested. Like Sona-zenkaichou and Shinra-san, they went to visit the third year classrooms to chat.”

Koneko-chan told me.

Four third year students chatting in the classroom. Perhaps they were talking about their memories of the past three years. After all, these four people, each of them would have their own memories of the past three years….

Kiba began speaking

“Rias-zenbouchou, has basically handed everything over to us. She said that if she comes here, then it would easily affect the new arrangement, so she would wait until we settled down to decide when she would come back.”

So, for the first week, she wants to see how we go. If Rias were here, she would probably be asked all sorts of questions. In that case, the new arrangement would be meaningless.

However, their graduation is only around two months away, so I hope that they’ll be able to come before then.

Suddenly, Gasper appeared lonely and said

“…So that means Rias-buchou and Akeno-san will hardly ever come, and then they’ll graduate…”

Gasper seemed down. Koneko-chan lightly patted Gya-suke’s head.

“…Gya-kun, you’re too pessimistic.”

“But, it is very lonely. Normally, Rias-buchou and Akeno-san would be here.”

Indeed. No matter what, those two would always have greeted me with a smile here.

Ravel took a sip of red tea, then said

“However, they said that Kuoh Academy’s university division was quite close to the high school division, so will they come back after graduation?”

As she said, Kuoh Academy’s university and high school were extremely close. It would only take a little while to walk. Basically, during lunch break, it would be possible to get here if you wanted.

Asia stared at the seat reserved for the President that Rias usually sat in, and sincerely said

“Rias-oneesama’s graduation is one thing, the new first year students who have joined us are another thing, and both will be happening soon…. I feel that, one year passes by very quickly. I came here in the spring of last year…”

That’s right, Asia met me in the spring of last year, at the end of April. In a few months’ time, that season will be here again…it felt like a very long, yet also short time.

Asia gazed at the ‘President’s’ seat…but was not mentally prepared to sit there. Even I understood Asia’s personality, so I didn’t tell her to ‘sit there’, so I decided to silently wait until she recognised herself as the new President, until she would sit in that spot of her own will.

“Then, in a few months, I’ll also become a third year student, and the new first year students — will also be starting. So shouldn’t we confirm our new members?”

Hearing what I suddenly said, Koneko-chan raised two fingers.

“There are two members.”

“Eh? Who?”

Ravel was the one who answered me.

“They are Le Fay-san and Bennia-san.”

—! I see. Le Fay had mentioned that she would transfer here. After all, she is my contracted magician and we live together as well. Rias and Azazel-sensei often said that, a girl of this age staying at home wasn’t healthy or something along those lines. I also heard that her brother Arthur was secretly hoping for her to transfer into Kuoh Academy.

I also heard about Bennia’s situation from some rumours. Whilst training with Saji, he had mentioned

“We’ve got a new person who’s quite interested in joining Kuoh Academy, they might join.”

Kiba then said

“This morning I heard from the Student Council members that, Le Fay-san and Bennia-san will be taking this year’s normal entrance exam. If they pass the exam, then they’ll become students here starting in spring.”

Ah—, things are really moving forward.

Le Fay’s appearance in uniform…would look great! Another thing to look forward to in spring!

Bennia in uniform…was unimaginable! Well anyway, she’s really cute so it should look good!

“Le Fay-san had said that she wanted to join us. Bennia-san never had a chance to speak to us, so it’s not certain…”

“Maybe, there might also be new members we’ve never seen before joining, so we don’t know what will happen.”

Ravel and Gasper said.

Indeed, until spring is actually here, we certainly won’t know about these things. Even if we’re discussing these things, they’re irrelevant right now.

Kiba seemed to have the same thoughts as me, so he then stood up and said

“In short, we need to decide on our initial direction. Although I think that maintaining things as they were last year is very feasible, we’re the first new arrangement since Rias-zenbouchou was President for the past three years, so we should first—”

Like this, the discussion on being the first new arrangement began.

After talking for a few hours, our new Occult Research Club took a break for the time being.

Our final plans were “There would be no sudden changes, and if there were any other changes we would discuss it again.”

This was simply maintaining the status quo, the same as Rias and

Akeno-san's arrangement, any new situations which arose would be handled by a discussion between us. We got a decent outcome from that discussion.

There was no other way. The previous administrators had left, and the new President Asia didn't have any confidence, as all she could say to our opinions were things like 'Y-Yes' and 'I-I understand' to show her agreement. So, we decided that we couldn't unreasonably force things onto her. After all, it wasn't possible to gain enough self-confidence on the first day. We first needed to support Asia, then allow her to develop her own confidence and awareness.

For Buchou, I need to try my best!

Mmm!!!! Even if the leadership has changed, my feelings towards the Occult Research Club have not changed since last year. Rias, Akeno-san, were truly amazing. I really feel that right now, as long as it's for Asia-buchou, I could do anything!

—Mmm, the matters relating to the club were put aside for now, as there was another worrying matter.

I looked at the sofa where Xenovia and Irina usually sat. Today, both of them were not here. The reason was due to election activities.

Xenovia had already started her campaign, and she was together with Irina in another room of the Old School Building currently discussing matters related to the election. This time, Irina was Xenovia's assistant. As a friend, Asia also wanted to join them, but she had just been promoted to the position of President, so she couldn't possibly leave her spot empty. Kiryuu from her class also became her helper. Kiryuu probably joined the discussion in a classroom of the Old School Building as well.

"Hmm, Xenovia and Irina, I wonder if they'll be alright for tomorrow's election activities."

As I just finished speaking, the doors to the clubroom went 'bang' and were opened.

The ones who appeared before us were, Xenovia in front, as well as

Irina and Kiryuu. Kiryuu said in a high pitched voice

“We have picked Xenovia’s victory dress for the election!”

Everyone in the new Occult Research Club, all focused their attention onto Xenovia!

“Hoo[12], cool right?”

Xenovia who was feeling cool, was currently dressed in fine clothing like that of the Medieval European aristocracy. But it was a man’s style! In other words, this was the man’s style beauty Xenovia! Although it looked good on her, it’s because Xenovia naturally leaned towards the boyish side…but, why wear this?

Kiryuu seemed to have taken notice of my puzzled expression, so she adjusted her glasses and said

“A-Ah-Ahem, I want Xenovia to suit her new clothing, and besides, doesn’t it have the feeling of a President? If she were wearing this while standing in front of the school gates, the female students would all be screaming.”

…Uhh, I don’t understand cosplay…Xenovia was currently pretending

“Ah, should I be saying ‘André’[13] right now, then carry Ise in my arms?”

“Mm hmm, there’s a saying that goes ‘clothes make a man just as a saddle makes a horse’[14], which would describe now!”

“…Irina-san, I think what you said is a little wrong…”

Asia (born overseas) gently corrected Irina (born in Japan).

While watching the three of them, Kiryuu and I quietly conversed.

“Ara ara, regarding that. If Xenovia were to use magic to bewitch everyone then she would be invincible.”

“Yeah, but you have to remember that Xenovia’s powers — hey, those powers cannot be used on normal students.”

I couldn't help blurting that out. While Kiryuu made a mischievous smile like that of a child.

"What you say is correct."

""Ahahaha""

I also laughed. ……. ……Eh? Eeeeh? U-Uh…. No no no. I carefully looked at Kiryuu from the corner of my eye. And next to her head was a [?] symbol….

"…Wait, wait a sec, hold on. Kiryuu, you, you just mentioned using magic or something?"

Just to be sure. Uhh, Kiryuu should be a normal student right…? That should be the case, she doesn't know about the true identity of us….

"Hmm, I said that?"

Kiryuu calmly replied. …I was already speechless and turned to look at Asia, who paused for a moment, then suddenly seemed to realise my reaction, and nervously said

"T-That, the thing that probably hasn't been mentioned to Ise-san…"

Xenovia then naturally continued for Asia and said

"Kiryuu is one of my regulars. Of course, she knows about our real identities."

……. ……Is that for real.

I looked at the church trio with the expression of 'is that for real?', and the three of them nodded.

"…Eh,
Eeee

I couldn't hide me bewilderment and asked Kiryuu. Kiryuu recalled while saying

"It should be sometime back in December. I received a flyer near the station. Then I tried thinking about it, and summoned Xenovia. In the end, after talking to her, Rias-san also appeared so that's how I know about the current situation."

D-December…. That was last month. And it was around the station that she received a flyer…. Then not only did she summon Xenovia, but Rias also appeared….

Kiryuu continued while giggling.

"Don't worry. I haven't told anyone, and I won't tell Matsuda and Motohama. Because Rias-san and Asia are my friends, they asked me not to tell anyone. With these kinds of things, I'll keep my lips sealed."

…Really, that was good. I didn't imagine, that this person would actually know about our true identities…. That is to say, last month, although Kiryuu knew that we were devils, she still continued talking to us as usual…. Kiryuu nodded.

"But, you haven't got it easy, Ise. I heard from Xenovia and Asia, that you hold the fate of the world in your hands right? Although, since you're usually so perverted, it's quite difficult to imagine."

Kiryuu kept poking me with her elbow while saying "You guys, you guys."…ah, but it was still surprising. Everyone else here, half of them were calm and the other half were surprised. In other words, some people knew the truth, but there were also some who were kept in the dark like me. Then again, as our leader, Rias did not feel that this was important. …Considering that she is a classmate of mine, it was quite unexpected. Well, maybe because we fought a tremendous battle last month, Rias didn't want us to have any extra burdens on our mind.

"Well, I think that Xenovia has no problems even without makeup, so there's no need to wear strange costumes. If you think that there'll be an obvious disadvantage then you could try this, or something like

this.”

Kiryuu pretended to hold a camera, taking pictures of Xenovia.

“I won’t lose. I’ll definitely win against Hanakai!”

“Yes, that’s the spirit, Xenovia!”

“Yes, that’s right! Although I can’t come to help you as I’m the President now, but I’ll still support Xenovia as a friend!”

“Ah, that’s the heart of friendship, my friends!”

“““Amen!”””

Xenovia, Irina and Asia linked their arms around each other’s shoulders, looking full of enthusiasm.

Kiryuu then called out and spoke to everyone

“So, that’s why I said that I’ll assist Xenovia, you guys of the new Occult Research Club need to work hard.”

After saying that, she took Xenovia and Irina with her to leave, returning to the empty room in the Old School Building. It seems like they have more things to discuss.

…Anyway, Kiryuu, she…. It was just the beginning of a new year, and something so extraordinary already happened. That’s not to say, there’ll be a lot of noteworthy things happening this year…. I, might even die three times this year….

After Xenovia’s commotion, and waiting until everyone had calmed down, Ravel raised her hand again.

“Next, I’ll wait until after the Occult Research Club has settled down from its initial period, as I need to return to the underworld for a while.”

Hearing this, Kiba said

“Now that you mention it, Ravel-san needs to temporarily return as a member of her brother’s peerage.”

“Currently Raiser-oniisama’s peerage is not full. I was quite worried, so this time okaa-sama[151] traded pieces again, and I’ll be back to join the game.”

That’s right, Raiser’s return to the game was previously determined. What’s more, his opponent is the current Champion, Diehauser Belial-san! Everyone was shocked, as they didn’t imagine that the first match upon his return would be against the Champion.

Ravel’s participation in this game was already decided. It seemed to be because Raiser still had not filled up all the members in his peerage, so he asked his mother to temporarily lend Ravel to him on the day of the game.

Because Raiser obtained Ravel by trading his unused [Bishop] piece with his mother, he was currently missing a [Bishop], last year he had a competition to see who would be his last [Bishop], and I also participated…but the new member hasn’t been decided yet.

Well, once the peerage has been decided, it’s difficult to redo it, so you need to be careful. Having said that, it is Raiser, so compromising on having the girls he likes is one of the reasons. Hmm! I understand your heart’s troubles, Raiser! Compromise is truly difficult; after all, it is a member of his harem!

At this time, I suddenly thought of a question. It was related to trades.

“Say, is it possible for last minute trades?”

I asked Kiba.

“Basically, trades which happen after a match is decided need to fulfil certain conditions to be recognised, so it can often lead to cancellations. If the trade happens after the match between the two was decided, then it could go on forever. If the trader was indecisive, or there were constant changes in strategy, the whole peerage could be traded within ten matches.”

That was his response, if you did make a trade after the match was decided, then it would be endless. It wouldn’t be surprising if the

entire team was replaced. As a result, their peerage — the [Evil Pieces] and the Rating Game would have no meaning.

Ravel continued and said

“This time, it was because onii-sama’s peerage was not full, I was originally a member of his peerage, the Rating Game prediction score is not largely affected, it was agreed to by the side predicted to win the game, and various other conditions.”

So their opponents also allowed it. To begin with this match was quite one-sided, even though Diehauser allowed the new member, it doesn’t change much.

“…How much is the predicted winning side’s ranking currently ahead by?”

I asked everyone. A Rating Game was like the ranking of pieces in human chess, to Rate — points were used to determine ranking. As I had forgotten Emperor Belial’s current points, I asked everyone.

Koneko-chan was the one who replied

“…It seems like it’s around 3500 points. Even the Top 10 who are ranked over 3000 points are called unknowns.”

Unrivalled. Well, I did hear that he’s been the Champion for some time.

“So, what about Raiser?”

I wondered about the points of the one I fought with, Raiser’s points.

“…Not even 2000 points. And he’s still regarded as one of the promising young competitors…”

Ravel timidly said.

…The difference is more than 1500?! Hey, hey, hey, that’s quite ridiculous! This isn’t even a competition!

“T-There isn’t a problem with such a large difference?”

I asked with a stiff voice.

Kiba tilted his head and said

“Normally speaking, a game with such a large difference wouldn’t be held. This time’s game is Raiser Phoenix-san’s return match, and also a chance for the underworld which has constantly been attacked by terrorists to watch his match against the Champion; it’s more of an exhibition match.”

An exhibition match! So it’s just for show. Well, with such a large ranking difference, it would turn into this situation. Although I feel a little sorry for Raiser about saying this, but this match probably won’t be a serious showdown.

Ravel continued to tell me more information.

“If I had to say it, this is actually a special event known as [Emperor Belial’s Ten Matches], and one of his opponents is onii-sama.”

“Ah, so what Rias was talking about at the end of the year, ‘The Ten Matches which must be recorded…’ was actually this.”

During her free time, Rias had suddenly thought of the same thing and said that. So what she was referring to was actually this.

“Because there are many combinations that you wouldn’t normally see, Rias-zenbuchou also thought of the same thing, this is because the battles apart from the Phoenix battle are just as interesting.”

Kiba added.

So that’s how it was. Ten matches! That was the special event that the Champion would be participating in. And Raiser was also one of the people who would be in it. In a sense, this would be the glory of a young devil. After all, not only would you be able to compete against the Champion, it would also be an excellent experience, and simply being chosen to participate in a match would be a great honour. Even if it was me, if I was able to have such an opportunity, I’d be extremely happy.

With a proud look, Ravel then said

“A-Anyway, this is a great honour to onii-sama, as well as the

Phoenix family, despite only being an exhibition match, to be selected as one of Emperor Belial's opponents, it makes us very happy. There's absolutely no reason to refuse."

Hehe, although she rarely talks about her brother, she's actually very concerned about him. That's one of Ravel's good points, being so cute.

Ravel continued speaking about the previous topic.

"So because of these reasons, I will be temporarily returning to the Phoenix household."

As everyone expressed their understanding, more than ten people entered the clubroom.

Rias, Akeno-san, Azazel-sensei, as well as Sona-kaichou's household. Everyone had a serious expression on their face. Seeing their appearance, everyone in the new Occult Research Club had a premonition that something significant had happened.

Asia called for Xenovia and Irina in the other room to return as well. Whereas the ordinary student, Kiryuu, waited in the other room.

After being certain that everyone had gathered, Sensei looked at everyone and said

"Although it's the beginning of a new school term, I regret to say that there is some bad news. Well, it's not the worst, but I should at least tell you first."

Not the worst of bad news…. Well, these days it's always been bad news.

Sensei continued

"Some of the Church's followers — in particular the warriors under its control are rebelling, I mentioned this last year didn't I?"

That's right, the Church's warriors are currently the people who are at the centre of this rebellion. After the Three Factions joined forces, ever since they had to follow the [Prohibition of Devils and Fallen Angels as enemies], they've been dissatisfied with their lives. Not to

mention that everyone had their own reasons, originally they didn't have a good impression of Devils nor Fallen Angels, and then the Peace Treaty from the upper echelons appeared out of the blue. Even so, they were still disgruntled about having to stop their old job, instead going to hunt vampires and monsters. Now, however, it is said that even the vampires are moving towards the same direction as the Three Factions with a peace treaty. Whilst some of the soldiers feel at ease, naturally, there are a lot of people who feel dissatisfied.

Thus, the outcry of dissatisfaction by these warriors has caused them to start a rebellion together. Putting yourself into their position, it would be like taking away their reason to fight — their chance for revenge, it's like taking away their food, the very reason that they live for. Regarding this matter, Xenovia had previously said "It's not difficult to understand."

"For the Lord, for the Church, for the fight against the existence of evil, the reason that they were fighting had suddenly been taken away from them…. They don't know how they should live their lives, they really are quite helpless."

Xenovia's words are quite persuasive. This is because she once also lost her reason to fight, and left the Church. Although she's settled down now and accepted her current life as a devil…not all soldiers can be the same, to be able to find a new meaning for their existence. The current situation is just like that.

Azazel-sensei continued

"The Church group's rebels…in fact, most of them have already stopped. The ones who were provoking riots have already been suppressed. The cadre class leaders who were behind it have all been arrested. —But"

Sensei raised three fingers.

"Three of the rebel leaders are on the run. Currently, there are many soldiers who are still following them."

…The mastermind is leading the soldiers huh.

Sona-zenkaichou then listed their names

“The three of them are His Eminence Cardinal Bishop Teodoro Legrenzi, His Eminence Cardinal Priest Vasco Strada, and His Eminence Cardinal Deacon Ewald Cristaldi.”[161]

Hearing this, Rias said with a soft voice

“…I’ve heard of these names.”

I then quietly asked Koneko-chan “…What are those positions?”. Although I’ve just come to understand the situation of the Devils’, I’m still unfamiliar with the Church. Koneko-chan sighed, then said

“…A Cardinal Bishop is a high position within the Church, second only to the Pope. A Cardinal Priest is one rank lower, and a Cardinal Deacon is one rank lower than that. Although there are several people who hold the title of each position, the names mentioned are highly regarded.”

So the names of those mentioned are all extraordinary people. And they’re also famous to the point that even Koneko-chan knows about them. Kiba then said to me

“That is to say, the people in the Church who are ranked second, third and fourth instigated this rebellion, and are still on the run.”

I see, it’s actually quite easy to understand then. This report left Asia, Xenovia and Irina who were originally from the Church at a loss for words. In particular, Xenovia and Irina who were once warriors nervously stiffened the expression on their eyes.

Xenovia finally spoke

“…His Eminence Strada and Cristaldi-sensei”

“Do you know them?”

Hearing my question, she widened her eyes and said

“Of course. — His Eminence Strada is the previous user of Durandal.”

“—!”

This honest declaration left me, and some of the other members here speechless! …It truly was too shocking! It was beyond our expectations that the previous wielder of that holy sword was actually one of the leaders behind the rebellion!

Azazel-sensei said

“This man is among the minority of Durandal wielders who is capable of rivalling Roland, and many people believe that he’s even surpassed Roland [171]. He’s also one of the few people who’ve successfully emerged from the war. He was a man who embodied strength and authority on the battlefield, and is also a leader.”

An extraordinary man who was originally a warrior! On top of that, he was also a wielder of Durandal…. Irina then said

“His Eminence Strada is already eighty seven years old…”

This guy’s not like an old man! He’s over eighty and yet he still has the energy to start a rebellion! Is he weak from old age then?

But, Xenovia’s eyes still conveyed seriousness.

“…It would be best to forget about his age. This man…is a living legend. His body has barely aged.”

—! You’ve got to be joking. No matter what you say, being over eighty, that’s an old man! Yet he’s a human? Well, if he’s already eighty years old then….

Sensei’s expression was just as serious as Xenovia’s.

“…Even if that guy looks older now, he’s not weak, he’s still just as strong. In World War II, he fought against Kokabiel from our side once, and in the end we were at a disadvantage. This guy has quite an interest in holy swords, and he also has many achievements.”

Kokabiel was at a disadvantage against a human?! …With what happened after the incident with the holy swords being stolen last year, it feels as though there’s some sort of strange connection of fate. Speaking of which, that guy Kokabiel had once said something

about it, Durandal's previous wielder was an incredible person.

"I remember now, wasn't he was one of the top candidates to be an Ace of the Four Great Seraphs?"

Hearing sensei's question, Irina nodded.

"Yes. Uriel-sama and Raphael-sama had both selected His Eminence Strada, but he refused both of them. …He said that he wants to return to the Lord upon death."

Two of the Four Great Seraphs made an offer at the same time but they were both rejected!

Everyone's expression was serious, but only Asia made a complicated smile.

"While I was a nun with the Church, I met His Eminence Strada once…he seemed to be an honest and friendly person."

Asia didn't have a bad impression of him. That was why the news of his rebellion made her confused.

"Personally, I really don't want to see Cristaldi-sensei…. After all, as warriors of the Church, we've been under his care and he's also been our mentor."

Irina mentioned another person who was involved in the rebellion, Ewald Cristaldi.

The mentor of the Church's warriors…. Xenovia and Irina were definitely facing some complicated feelings right now.

Xenovia nodded in agreement to Irina.

"I was also under the guidance of Cristaldi-sensei, he taught me how to fight against devils and vampires…"

"…When I went to the Vatican, Cristaldi-sensei diligently taught me how to use Excalibur. I've heard that when Cristaldi-sensei was on the frontlines, he was able to simultaneously control three of the six Excaliburs."

Azazel-sensei confirmed Irina's words

“Ah, that’s true. Back then, Ewald Cristaldi was a topic of heated discussion within the Grigori. Although he could only use three of the Excaliburs simultaneously, people have said that theoretically it wouldn’t be impossible for him to control all six of the swords at once. Anyway, whether its Vasco Strada or Ewald Cristaldi, they were well-known during the war as ridiculously strong people. Plus, they also trained a large number of warriors, and those warriors have said that those two people could be described as titans. With a single call, they could have many warriors follow in response…. In fact, more than half of the Church’s warriors are involved in this rebellion.”

…These two men are the most influential people in the Church. They’re also the former users of Durandal and Excalibur…. Since it’s come to this, it makes people feel as though this can no longer be resolved through simple means. This is how lesser powers will gather to where the stronger power is.

Sona-zenkaichou adjusted her glasses then said

“They’re blessed with talent, so much so that they’re even able to kill the highest class of devils—. After all, such people are extremely rare; their power has even become a legend to devils and they’re still alive even now.”

…So the two people called Ewald Cristaldi and Vasco Strada are actually such formidable opponents….

Sensei then mentioned the last person of the three who were mentioned.

“Teodoro Legrenzi is the youngest, whose position as a Cardinal Bishop is a special case.”

Asia seemed to know something about this person, so she said

“…The truth is, I’ve never seen him. It’s said that within the higher-ups of the Church, he’s quite a mysterious person.”

“Indeed.”

“I’ve also only heard of his name but have never seen him in person.

Even Sister Griselda is probably in the same position as us."

Xenovia and Irina said in reply to Asia. Even a reincarnated angel hasn't seen him, he truly is mysterious. This person probably has some reason to keep himself hidden.

Hearing this, in relation to the three people who are on the run…. I don't want to think about what's going on behind the scenes here, but it isn't hard to imagine.

Sensei returned to the original topic

"In other words, the three people behind the rebellion and the warriors who are following them are currently fugitives. And I'm afraid that their destination is—"

Sensei extended his index finger and pointed to the ground.

"I'm afraid that it's here. We interrogated some of the captured warriors, they were hoping to find [DxD], but they certainly didn't just want to talk."

…So that's what they say. …Really, during such a busy time we get drawn into the Church's rebellion. The diverse team of [DxD] is actually the target of their own comrades. Although our existence itself is rather special. Give me a break….

Everyone's tension was growing more and more intense. However, sensei made a wry smile.

"Come on, there's no need to be so serious. Although you've been through many life and death situations, you can be certain of this, that this incident should have zero casualties. In fact, although there were people injured in the rebellion at the Vatican, no one lost their lives. Reincarnated angels did their best to keep the situation from getting worse. In this incident, ultimately there were many warriors who were distressed, and their long-standing resentment burst out."

No one died. That's truly lucky…but it might happen again, which is almost certain now, so we can't relax yet!

Sona-zenkaichou sighed.

“…But, it’s possible that this could turn into a full-scale war. Although we’re trying not to cause any harm, we can’t know for certain what will happen. …Terrorists may also capitalise on this opportunity to make their move. After all, this is the perfect opportunity for them to do so.”

Zenkaichou’s reasoning certainly made sense. Whilst we’re being attacked by the rebels, there’s no guarantee that Qlippoth won’t do anything. From the terrorists’ point of view, the defeat of either side would be favourable.

Sensei shrugged.

“Of course, we still need to be wary. …It’s said that this whole incident was started by Rizevim when that guy encouraged the higher-ups of the Church. In terms of the rebellion, that man is truly the devil. If it’s related to incitement and encouragement, no one can even come close to him. You can’t be overly cautious, which is basically what Sona just said.”

…So that bastard was behind all this. I totally understand what sensei said. That guy…every single word that guy says is made to confuse people. Even if he knows everything, he does this on purpose; I can’t even control my anger towards this guy.

“…Having said that, Kuoh Academy seems to have some sort of fate connecting it to holy swords.”

Saji whispered. I’ve had the same thought. I never expected that the sword’s wielders and the swords themselves would all be gathered here.

“……”

Kiba noticed and went into a state of deep thought. …Having a connection to holy swords, that goes for him as well.

“Sorry Kiba. I shouldn’t just say things like that.”

Saji apologised with an embarrassed expression, to which Kiba laughed softly.

“It’s fine, don’t worry. I’ve come to terms with it now so I won’t be the same as before, relying on my hatred of holy swords to live.”

That’s true. But…his insecure feelings make me worry. If an even more significant event occurs, Kiba would definitely give up his life to fight. I only learned about it after the battle, that he acted quite recklessly to defeat the mass produced Grendel….

Although he’s usually calm, in essence he’s an unsheathed sword—. That guy really needs a sheath. And I truly hope that there’s someone who can take on the role of his scabbard…. Well, even though Kiba understands my concerns, he’s not going to hold back. …If you die, I won’t forgive you. My friend.

Sensei confidently smiled, then said

“No, the fate with holy swords is not superficial and not necessarily a joke. This is a good opportunity. —Xenovia, Irina, Kiba, the wielders of holy swords should strive to surpass their predecessors. If the opportunity arises, you should go all out. Since you’re taking on the name of [DxD], this is the least you can do, use your skill against the enemy.”

Hearing Azazel-sensei’s guidance, all three of them nodded with a determined expression.

“Surpass our predecessors…”

Xenovia said to herself.

—Exceed their predecessors.

Not only with holy swords, she also has the same idea in running for President. With Xenovia’s ability, doing better than anyone else isn’t a problem.

“Listen well everyone. It should be the same towards the Church rebels as with Qlippoth, you can’t let your guard down.”

With those words, sensei concluded today’s urgent meeting.

The club activities for the day also ended, and the time for our after school activities began.

Part 2

Later that night.

In the Hyoudou mansion's underground indoor pool, were the Occult Research Club members, Dulio, Sister Griselda, the Vali team (Vali, Bikou, Arthur, Kuroka, Le Fay), as well as Slash Dog Tobio Ikuse-san and others. The Sitri team said that they had to deal with something urgent, thus they weren't able to come.

There were two people above the pool who were making waves whilst floating in the air, they were me in armour and — Rias who had completely covered herself in her aura. Prior to this, we two showed the members of [DxD] our new ability.

As a result of demonstrating our new ability, water from the pool had splashed up violently, with the area around the pool completely wet, but evidently people were expecting it so they had used umbrellas, demonic energy and magic to shield themselves.

About the new technique, because it would utilise the Heavenly Dragon Ddraig's power, in order to get Vali's opinion, I called him specifically for it…but I didn't expect that I'd be able to use it without any preparation, and to some extent it was better than I thought!

"Woohoo!"

Seeing our new technique, the audience applauded and cheered. What we showed was a collaborative move. She had been thinking of ways to combine my power and her own destruction magic together. After the New Year, she came to discuss this with me. Hearing her ideas, I thought "That seems to be possible." So, I called the other Heavenly Dragon Vali for help, listened to his opinion, and then finally created this new technique.

Ah—, if I simply relied on myself, there would be too many things that wouldn't be possible. The creation of this new technique, I think

that it was only possible by relying on Rias's talent. Good, the next time we encounter an enemy, if it feels like we can use it, we'll try it out.

After practising the technique, Rias and I landed on the edge of the pool. I deactivated my armour to catch my breath. Everyone was having a leisurely time in the pool.

"Aahh…ooh! I can't swimmmm!"

The person who was screaming was Gasper. He seemed to be with Koneko-chan, Ravel, Kuroka, and Le Fay, playing water polo but had slipped and now appeared to be drowning.

"Hey, Gya-suke! You need to be a man, let's see you swim in this shallow water!"

I said that to him with a wry smile, but—

"I am…a vampire! I'm naturally afraid of waaatterrr!"

He cried. No, that's not right, you were just in the water playing water polo!

"You're of mixed blood! Not to mention that you're currently a devil! You can do it! You can stand there anyway!"

After saying that, he finally reacted and said "Ah, right" then stood up in the pool…. I can't stand it, he finally feels a little more masculine but I didn't think he'd still be embarrassing in so many ways…. Even his swimwear, is a ladies style!

"Hoho, Gya-kun is so cute nyan ♪"

Kuroka who was touching his head…because she was wearing a bikini which showed a lot of skin, her breasts kept bouncing. Mmmm, this is a feast for my eyes!

When it comes to myself

"Haha, this kind of thing once in a while isn't bad."

"Yes, fufu."

I was currently with Akeno-san and Rias, helping these two onee-sans apply their sunscreen! They're actually using sunscreen even at an underground pool! It was currently winter, and it also isn't possible to get any sunlight underground! Also, all that's needed to prevent sunburns is the use of some magic, so the use of sunscreen is purely for cosmetic reasons! But! As soon as I heard that they'd let me apply sunscreen, I, Hyoudou Issei happily came to do it!

Two beach beds were placed side by side next to the pool! Lying on them were two onee-sans! They even took off their bikinis, so their backs were bare!

Hehehe! I'm already very familiar with this type of sunscreen, I rubbed sunscreen onto Rias and Akeno-san in a skilful manner!

"Mmmm"

"Ahhh"

The two of them couldn't help making such noises.

My hands glided over their bodies! …Aahhh, such incredibly smooth and delicate skin! Their elasticity is just right, with a sensual feeling as I slid my fingers across Rias and Akeno-san's backs, over their thighs, and all the way down to their calves! After coating their toes, I started over, making sure to cover every spot! First was Akeno-san. Starting from her fingertips, going over her back, rub-rub-rub-rub-rubbing all over down to her hips! I also rubbed her bottom over and over again! I couldn't help it! If they asked me to do it, I have no reason not to! Absolutely no reason at all!

"……Aahhh, aahhh……"

Akeno-san's sweet sounds almost made my brain melt! And the feeling of her bottom…was like a pudding that would never break, my fingers and my palms were drawn into it! Aaaaaaaaahhhh, who knew there could be such an incredible sensation! They're so smooth, soft, and full of elasticity, it just makes me want to be able to touch Akeno-san's bottom for the rest of my life!

Seeing this scene, Rias said

“Ise, what about my front side…there’s a lot of people looking here, so it’s not very convenient. How about we continue on the bed? Or in the bath?”

Please don’t look at me and say such flirtatious things! It’ll make me very confused!

Aaahhh, applying sunscreen to her chest on the bed! That would also be great! Applying sunscreen on her whilst naked in the large bath! That would also be great! I-It’ truly difficult~ !

What should I do~ ! But even in my state of confusion, I was still thinking about firmly holding onto Akeno-san’s bottom!

Akeno-san couldn’t help making sweet noises whilst at the same time she also said

“Ara ara, how about, mmm, I get, mmmmm, on the bed to continue. Fufufu, this is quite exciting, ahhmmm. Ooh, I wonder if, aahhh, anything more intense than rubbing sunscreen on will happen?”

Ahhh, even Akeno-san was gazing at me seductively!

—Then, I also heard the voices of other people who were around. It was Irina and Rossweisse-san.

“I-I also want darling to help me apply sunscreen, but I can’t get in between these two onee-samas!”

“……How inappropriate! I thought I was only innocently looking at the way people apply sunscreen! This is so shameful!”

You two both wanted me to help you apply sunscreen!? I-I’m so happy, but doing four people seems a bit difficult! It would take too much time, it seems like there won’t be enough time for rubbing oppai today!

Someone suddenly joined in — it was Ravel! She had come out of the pool in the middle of her water polo game.

“Although now is the time for leisure, Ise-sama’s time is very precious! That’s enough time spent on applying sunscreen!”

Ravel's management of my schedule was very strict, she objected against Irina and Rossweisse-san's requests…but this time Rias said

"Ravel, you should let him do this. You need to relax occasionally, can you do that?"

"I-I can do that!? …Then, how should I do it?"

Whaaa! Should I do it or not, this is confusing!? After thinking for a moment, Ravel quickly took out a notebook, then shouted

"Come over to decide on the allocation of time for applying sunscreen!"

—After saying that, she began discussing this with Rias! H-H-Hey! T-There's going to be a timetable!? No, I'm happy about this! But isn't the number of people a bit too much!? Then Rias, Akeno-san, Irina, Rossweisse-san, and Ravel put me aside, and they began deciding on my schedule for applying sunscreen! Then Kuroka also pulled out of the water polo game, raised her hand and said "I'm also joining in nya!". Those six people huddled together in a circular formation, and began discussing my schedule for applying sunscreen.

This isn't a scene that you see every time! At this rate, I'll be faced with an onslaught from the girls, and it'll become a very awkward situation! …Fine, this must be the cost of happiness! I think so! I really hope so!

After being freed from my job of applying sunscreen, I walked over to a diving platform and sat down, then shifted my gaze over to the pool's edge. Several girls were there discussing matters related to applying sunscreen, and on another side, Asia was talking to

Xenovia. Seeing Xenovia's serious expression, I could guess that they were currently talking about issues related to the Student Council Election.

"Xenovia seems to have changed."

—I don't know who said that to me. I turned around to look — it was Sister Griselda-san who was wearing a bikini!

Currently, her large and prominent oppai which were usually concealed under her nun's uniform appeared in front of me! Compared to her original plain colour and pure image, there was a large contrast after she wore a bikini, which generated a strong sense of attraction! Her dazzling white skin was too perfect!

She sat beside me on the diving platform.

"…Slashing Princess, that was Xenovia's title when she was a warrior. Using Excalibur and Durandal, she killed and defeated many enemies of the Church."

I've heard of this before. I'd heard that during her time with the Church, as a swordsman of God, she had executed devils, vampires and various monsters. Because she showed no mercy in killing her enemies, people didn't understand her and along with her inaccessible personality, at some point people began making fun of her by calling her [Slashing Princess].

Sister Griselda continued.

"She's a child who needs a lot of care. Because we've been in the same facility, I was selected to be responsible for taking care of her, but no matter what I said, she grew big and tall, I taught her the minimum behaviour she should have as a lady, I've already done all I can."

At first glance, she seemed to be complaining, but looking closer at her face, it was as if she was talking about a younger sister, with a smile full of warmth.

"Ever since she met her partner of the same age — Irina, she would occasionally show the expression that a girl of her age should."

As Sister Griselda said, to become Xenovia's partner, the person who was with her long-term, the first person to do that was Irina. It was said that most people who became Xenovia's partner afterwards, were unable to adapt to her personality or fighting style, rejecting partnership the next time. This meant that only Irina was able to adapt to Xenovia's personality and fighting style. To me, it's because both of them were girls who had quirky personalities. I'd say that the combination of their quirky personalities formed a good chemistry, they were like kindred souls, hence they became partners.

With a smile, Sister Griselda said

"When I heard that she'd become a devil, I fainted on the spot, but seeing her now occasionally worried, occasionally laughing, I feel that this is good."

I followed Sister Griselda's gaze, noticing Irina, Asia and Xenovia together. She was watching the faces of those three in conversation with each other.

Three people laughing together, it was truly a heartwarming scene —.

"I heard that she plans to become the Student Council President."

"Yeah. At first I thought she was joking, but it seems that she was serious. After school, she and her friends stayed back to have a strategy meeting for the election."

"She really is enjoying school life."

Sister Griselda truly felt joy from the bottom of her heart for the changes in Xenovia. Although she normally appears to be strict towards Xenovia, I think the truth is that they really care about each other.

She said to me solemnly

"Hyoudou Issei-kun, please, please take good care of that child."

"Yes, of course! But I have to say, I don't think I'm of much use. How

about this, I think letting her be together with Asia, Irina and her classmates would be much better for her."

However, Sister Griselda listened to me and shook her head.

"Although what you say is correct…I'm talking about her as a woman. Ohh, I see. Living with several girls must be difficult."

After giving me an understanding smile, Sister Griselda stood up and left with a "Goodbye" and headed towards Xenovia. I got concerned for a moment thinking that I'd said something wrong, but then I saw Sister Griselda scolding Xenovia …humpf, that Xenovia is really…

Whatever, just being able to see a Sister in a bikini was an enjoyable experience! Every part of it was precious, I must record it into my memory.

While I was doing that, I heard the Vali team's conversation.

"Hey, Vali. Can you do me a favour when we're free which can reduce my sins? Doesn't the work that [DxD] does seem better?"

It was Bikou. To which Vali replied

"I want to spend my time on attacking Rizevim and evil dragons, as well as training my own power. Sorry, tasks like that should be given to Kuroka or Le Fay."

Vali directly refused. He would occasionally show such an expression when he was training. But his primary opponents were strong people like the First Generation Sun Wukong-jisan [181] and Dulio. He came over today, one reason was to provide his opinion, and the other reason was probably because he became interested in my new technique.

"I heard rumours that people who started the Church's rebellion were holy sword wielders, which is highly interesting."

Arthur adjusted his glasses, smiling contemptuously.

That guy seems like he's doing things according to his own motives….

Hearing Arthur's words, Vali said

"Yes, Arthur. What do you plan to do this time? Very soon the legendary wielders of holy swords may be arriving here."

Hearing this, Arthur stroked his chin, then eagerly said "That wouldn't be a bad idea" and laughed. …From what I can see, Arthur is probably the most difficult to deal with in the Vali team. On the other hand, Bikou and I could get along with each other.

Where the three males of the Vali team were conversing, another person was approaching them—.

"Vali, you shouldn't make things too difficult for Azazel-san."

—It was Slash Dog Tobio Ikuse-san.

Seeing Ikuse-san appear, Vali shrugged.

"…It's Tobio. Since you're here, whether it's a matter related to Azazel or [DxD], there should be no problems."

"But if you're here, things should be even better, Vali."

"I'd actually like to have a fight with you. —I'd really like to settle the scores from last time."

Vali's expression showed that he was ready for a fight. —But, Ikuse-san shook his head.

"If you want a fight then you should fight with the Sekiryuutei. Besides, I'm not your destined opponent."

Hearing this, Vali laughed loudly, then turned around to leave.

"Hold on, Vali. Anyway, you should at least listen to the planned schedule after today."

After Ikuse-san finished speaking, Vali stopped walking, and said without turning around

"…I know. But I'm going to go back up first."

—Uhhh. …Seeing Vali readily accept someone else's opinion, I

couldn't hide my surprise. …Woah, that guy, actually said something like that to someone other than Azazel-sensei….

Shortly after I watched their exchange, Ikuse-san noticed me and began walking over.

"Yo, Hyoudou Issei-kun. Perhaps you saw something unusual just then."

"No, that wasn't the case…"

"About Vali, I need to thank you for dealing with him."

Ikuse-san thanked me.

"…It's a surprise, that Ikuse-san would actually say something like that to me."

"Well, I should after all that's happened."

Saying so, he took out a photograph.

—In the photo was Ikuse-san when he was a student, as well as other boys and girls who appeared to be his companions. One of them was a girl dressed up as a magician and a brown haired delinquent.

Above them there was an arrogant looking silver-haired boy. …His face had a resemblance to Vali.

"…This is an old photo? Whoa, that guy is Vali? He looks especially arrogant!"

Hearing what I said, Ikuse-san laughed.

"He was very arrogant. Even more arrogant than he is now."

"The other people in the photo are also Ikuse-san's, your companions right?"

"…Yes, they're members of the team that was formed during the unrest four years ago. During that time, a lot of things related to Sacred Gears frequently occurred. Ever since then, I've been working together with them, even till now."

Ah, that is to say, among those who help the Grigori, that was a photo of some of the members.

“In the past, I lived with Vali for a period of time, so we know each other very well. Which is why I’m saying thanks to you.”

“As I had heard that you guys were hostile towards each other, I always thought that you hated him.”

Ikuse-san also seemed somewhat confused, so I didn’t know how to respond.

“Hostile? I wouldn’t say hostile, rather that guy is too clingy, I simply try to avoid him. Every time we meet, he’s always shouting at me, he’s simply too annoying. It feels like having a troublesome little brother.”

If he said something like that to me, it really must have been a headache to deal with. Speaking of which, that guy used to be a battle maniac.

“I heard that you’re really strong Ikuse-san? If you and I were on the front lines of the battlefield together, it certainly would provide us with a lot of courage.”

I heard that every time Azazel-sensei went to a dangerous place, the guard accompanying him was Ikuse-san. Azazel-sensei even had Ikuse-san with him when he went to the Underworld to see Hades. However, Ikuse-san shook his head.

“I simply work behind the scenes. To have the Two Heavenly Dragons as an opponent or an ally, to me that is too exaggerated and doesn’t suit me.”

…He’s really quite a low-profile person. Still, for us to be able to fight on the front lines, it’s only possible because this guy and his companions are silently supporting us from behind. Forcing him to move to the front lines probably isn’t good.

I suddenly realized, that at some point a large black dog had sat down beside me — I remembered that its name should be Jin. Don’t get so close to me while being silent, you little dog. The aura

surrounding its body was unusual, and I could not tell what it was thinking by looking into its red eyes. Its red eyes were staring at me. …Its pupils seemed to be drawing me in, their bottomlessness would creep people out.

Ikuse-san patted Jin's head.

"Sorry about that. This guy has a habit where it likes staring into things that interest it. As a guess, it's probably noticed the dragon which resides in your body, Hyoudou Issei."

Really, so it was looking into my body.

"Yeah, that dog kept on staring at me. Perhaps it's particularly interested in Heavenly Dragons."

—That was what Ddraig said.

"…Do you want to talk to Ddraig?"

"No, I don't think they can speak with each other. Jin can understand human language, but it's absolutely impossible for it to speak it."

…It is separate from the Sacred Gear. Although it seems to be a Sacred Gear, this dog still retains a dogs' will.

"Vali was watching you rub on sunscreen before. From the looks of it, he was highly interested in the process of rubbing the butt."

"Really!?"

That was what happened! That guy was actually interested in the way that I was rubbing Akeno-san's butt! I-Indeed, so Vali really belongs to the butt faction…!?

However, Ikuse-san quickly followed up with

"Just kidding."

Just kidding!? I seriously believed it! You know, that guy Vali actually watched H DVDs together with me! I was happy, that he was just as I expected, he developed an interest in the female body! But, I was surprised to see that Ikuse-san actually liked to make jokes!

“Anyway, I’ll say goodbye now. You’ve shown me a good technique today.”

After saying that, he left. For someone that I don’t often speak to, it feels refreshing and good. Especially talking to someone who knew Vali before, it let me understand that guy’s other side which I didn’t know, which is unexpectedly interesting.

Well, it’s time to take a look at how the timetable for applying sunscreen is going, it seems like it’s become quite noisy. Xenovia and Asia were also currently urging my manager, Ravel.

“I want to register for getting sunscreen applied!”

“Me too!”

“…Well, I want it too.”

“W-Well then, I also want it!”

“I wonder if I should even try…”

Koneko-chan aside, even Gya-suke and Kiba want it to!? They want me to apply sunscreen onto the males! They’re not kidding! Suddenly, someone put their hand on my shoulder. I turned my head to look, it was actually Dulio. He looked at the scene and laughed.

“Oh—, whether it’s between boys or girls, Issei-san seems to be very popular. Hmm, well how about I ask you to help me to apply sunscreen to see how good it is?”

“Spare me from this…”

At this time, I could do nothing but helplessly lower my head. In this way, the day ended.

Part 3

The next day, during lunch break.

I happened to come across the first year students in the school courtyard — Koneko-chan, Ravel, Gasper, and began talking to them after lunch.

—At that time, the Church Trio and Kiryuu appeared. They distributed leaflets to the students who walked past.

“Come over, everyone! Please take a look at this! On these leaflets are proposals from the next Student Council President Xenovia! She’s a girl who can do anything if she puts her mind to it!”

“Here, please look after me in the future. Please cast a vote for Xenovia-san.”

“I pray that you make an honest vote! In any case, please!”

Irina, Kiryuu and Asia were enthusiastically handing out the leaflets to the students. Well, because it was currently the election period, the corridors were lined with handmade posters. The posters were of Xenovia assuming the pose of the Blessed Virgin Mary, along with [I will bring true peace to Kuoh Academy! I hope you vote honestly!] in large text, creating a rather strange environment. —However, given that Xenovia was originally a transfer student from overseas, along with her personality, which was widely known throughout the school, the general opinion of her posters and leaflets from students was [I really like her style], which was a surprisingly good response. …These Kuoh Academy students, could be described as tolerant, calm, and often curious.

Next, Asia (helps out with the election campaign during lunchtime), Irina, and Kiryuu accompanied Xenovia’s entrance into the courtyard. She hung a sash with her own name over her shoulder, and began to speak when she had reached the middle of the path.

“Ah—, fellow students of Kuoh Academy, how are you. I am a candidate for this year’s Student Council President election, second year Xenovia. I hope that everyone will listen to my speech. Once I become President—”

Oh—, she boldly dropped the [Desumasuchō][191] honorific, and she’s using her usual manner of speech. That’s truly to Xenovia’s style.

The students stopped walking, and listened to her speech, whilst occasionally male students would yell out “Yo! Xenovia-san, go for it!” whereas the female students cried out “I’m looking forward to you, Xenovia-chan” and similar words of support or encouragement.

Koneko-chan said while watching from afar

“…Xenovia-senpai is considered someone who is well known within the school, so as soon as she starts a speech, she naturally becomes surrounded by a crowd.”

Simply being a foreign girl was enough to catch people’s attention, not to mention the fact that she’s accompanied by Asia and Irina who, like her, are also highly popular people in the school. Not only the male students, even the female students are interested in her.

“Her style is completely different to that of Sona-zenkaichou, which has also attracted the attention of a lot of people.”

Ravel added.

That was why she had become the centre of attention. The previous President on one hand had a robust working capability, and on the other hand was also able to listen to the opinions of the students, resulting in a flexible response. Naturally the opposite of the Student Council President who gained the students’ trust by producing tangible results, the Sports Clubs type Xenovia was more of an athlete. Of course, the students want to know the reason why she’s a candidate.

However, just when Xenovia had attracted everyone’s attention, another candidate for Student Council President, Hanakai-san happened to walk past, and began exchanging greetings with the students.

“Hello everyone, how have things been recently?”

Hanakai-san was wearing a calm smile like that of Sona-zenkaichou whilst greeting the students. I heard that she truly respected Sona-zenkaichou, so I think this is naturally reflected in her behaviour and attitude.

“Good luck, Hanakai-san, I’m rooting for you.”

“I’ll be voting for you.”

Girls from the same year were cheering for her. I think I’ve heard people say that the people supporting Hanakai-san were mostly honour students.

…However, being Sona-zenkaichou’s successor isn’t easy. When I was a new student to the school, Sona-zenkaichou was already the Student Council President. That is to say, she led Kuoh Academy as the Student Council President for two consecutive years. Hanakai-san probably wants to succeed her position.

The person who walked up beside Hanakai-san was the candidate for Vice-President — Saji, there were also students who wanted to greet him.

“Hey, Saji, I’ll cast a vote for you as Vice-President, but you have to give my extra-curricular activities preferential treatment.”

An energetic looking male student half-jokingly said to him

“They’re two different things, I hope you can make an honest vote.”

Saji muttered something with his eyes half open, the male student then quickly laughed out loud.

“Hahaha, just kidding. I’ll vote for you.”

“Seriously, that’s what people from the Sports Clubs are like.”

Saji sighed…but I heard that it was this guy’s serious personality and resourcefulness that was liked, thus receiving great support from the Sports Clubs, especially the male students of the Sports Clubs who trust him.

I also heard that a female student who just transferred in, was running in the election for secretary or treasurer. According to the rumours, it was a beautiful foreign girl…but I haven’t even seen her around.

Then, I also heard that a famous male honour student from the first

year was entering the election. But I didn't get the details of that guy's information, so I don't really know much about it….

"That girl Xenovia, I don't know if she'll be able to beat Hanakai-san."

I quietly whispered. …Xenovia's opponent was Hanakai-san, she was often accompanying Sona-zenkaichou in the Student Council, and was more concerned about the Student Council than other people.

Koneko-chan said

"…I heard from a friend in the News Club, that it's currently six to four, with Xenovia-senpai in a disadvantaged position. Hanakai-senpai has not only worked alongside Sona-zenkaichou, she's also produced tangible results, so the support from the students for her is relatively high."

"Well, that's fair. But, there's actually forty percent who support Xenovia."

Forty percent — that's not too bad. For a new person as a candidate to have such a level of support at this time, I think that there's hope for a reversal. If it was only ten or twenty percent…the truth would be that loss was certain.

"…She's a foreigner, an outstanding athlete, able to get along with anyone, so this kind of personality makes her popular amongst both the male and female students. Especially with the first year female students, she's incredibly popular."

"It seems that to the first year female students, she's a very handsome woman, so her popularity is very high."

Gasper said from behind Koneko-chan.

Popularity with the first year female students.

"Xenovia-senpai! I'm supporting you!"

"Xenovia-oneesama! I'll definitely vote for you!"

Seeing this situation, it was evident that she indeed had a lot of

female first year students around her. Because Xenovia was slightly boyish, for those of the same gender — especially from the perspective of the junior female students, she should be very handsome.

“Thank you, I’ll work hard.”

After Xenovia replied with a smile to them, they sharply cried out “Kyaa—!” in a shrill voice.

Ravel suddenly said

“I heard that among Xenovia-sama’s supporters, half of those votes would be unshakable.”

“Oh, why is that?”

To my question, Ravel replied

“Because these people, are all girls from the sports clubs that Xenovia-sama has helped before, or were students that she helped when they experienced difficulties at school. Xenovia-sama was naturally born with this type of personality, she won’t turn her back on anyone who’s having trouble with anything. From the time before she was a candidate to be Student Council President or when she was an ordinary student, she was just quietly concerned about things in the school, that’s the reason for it.”

Perhaps it was also because of Xenovia’s athleticism, as she often helped out the girls’ sports clubs. Although there are some difficulties each time she received invitations to help out, by helping these people, she looked very happy. Her sense of justice is also stronger than most people, so she’ll definitely come to the aid of any student in need. I think that her kindness and deeds have accumulated over time, creating a group of unshakable supporters for her.

With this, it feels like the election campaign was really effective.

…The students of the school have created a new Kuoh Academy. This time last year, I felt that moving to the second year was very natural.

“I’m a third year student now.”

I said to myself.

Koneko-chan tugged on my sleeve. Gasper and Ravel were also smiling at me.

“In the next year, we’ll be there.”

Koneko-chan said to me. Aahhh, Koneko-sama is really good at reading people’s minds. I moved close to the three of them, and said

“Yes, I know. After one year, you need to take care more, my cute kouhai-tachi[101].”

—This time it’s my turn to lead these kids forwards. This is my role as their senior.

“But as a devil, we’re the seniors.”

Koneko-chan put me down again! I can’t stand it, I know already!

After school, Rias, Akeno-san and Xenovia all concluded the day’s extra-curricular activities, and we gathered together. Everyone reached a consensus, and we prepared to go to the neighbouring town’s Taiyaki shop[111]together to eat.

“I think that aside from bean paste filled Taiyaki, the rest are wrong.”

“But, the ones with custard are also hard to let go of.”

“…Originally they were wheat flour, sugar and eggs. Since these ingredients are also used to make baked pastries, bean paste, custard, or chocolate can be used.”

Rias sticks to the original, Ravel likes custard, whilst there’s no problem for Koneko-chan as long as it’s a pastry, and the discussion of desserts by the girls became very passionate.

Watching this pleasant and peaceful everyday scene, we prepared to pass the corner on a residential street.

—Ooh!

We suddenly felt an indescribable surge of pressure, and everyone instantly assumed a battle stance!

…What's going on, this feeling is…? A powerful wave of pressure could be felt approaching. It couldn't be called killing intent, but by no means did it seem benevolent…. However, it was certain that we felt an unknown person's clear intent!

Everyone was looking around warily. —At this time, Xenovia's appearance seemed very strange. Her hands were violently trembling.

"…How, this restless feeling is…. Durandal…?"

Although she used her left hand to hold on to her trembling right hand, her left hand itself was trembling slightly.

Koneko-chan's ears perked up, they seemed to have discovered something, and she turned to face a certain direction. Everyone else followed her gaze and looked in that direction!

Looking in that direciton — there stood a white-haired man draped in vestments[121]!

"Buon giorno[131], young devils."

This person's face was covered with wrinkles, only going by the appearance of his face, he should be a foreign old man over eighty years old. However, the body below his face contradicted this idea. An unimaginably thick neck, a thick chest, arms the size of tree trunks, legs which are probably the size of my waist…! The greatest point was his height, which looked like it was roughly two metres…? This was an ideal young body, which completely didn't match his elderly face!

—Whoa!

That old man's figure…vanished in an instant! Where did he go!? Where did he disappear to!? No, I didn't shift my eyes away!? There was no noise, nor were there any movements, he disappeared just like that!

Someone suddenly placed their hand on my shoulder.

“……Uh!”

When I turned my head to look, it was that tall and large old man! He moved behind my back in the blink of an eye!? On top of that, he was also right in the middle of our formation! None of my companions could even respond!?

They pulled back to increase their distance, and prepared to fight!

—But, a smile formed on that old man’s wrinkled face. He said in a gruff voice

“I’ve come from the Vatican, my name is Vasco Strada.”

……Uhhh!?

…T-This old guy, was the previous wielder of Durandal!? An important person of the Church! One of the people behind the rebellion!

Hearing his name, my companions became even more tense! I also tried to move — but there was an enormous amount of pressure on my shoulder. …It almost felt as if my heart was being gripped. Damn it…. How many times have I survived these desperate situations… right now I just let someone put their hand on my shoulder, and it turned out like this…! This old guy, what kind of person is this!

Vasco Strada turned to face Xenovia.

“Warrior Xenovia, it looks like you became a devil?”

“…Your Eminence Strada, it’s been a long time since we last saw each other.”

Xenovia’s expression was very serious, with beads of cold sweat all over her face. Normally she would act tough, but in front of this old guy, she’s become more nervous than ever!

The old man released his grip on my shoulder. It was like unfastening the bindings on my body, and I could move my body freely again.

…Is this really an old man over eighty…uh! I was shocked. It's the same as what Xenovia and Azazel-sensei estimated, it feels like his strength is so powerful that no one could imagine that it belonged to an old man!

Vasco Strada took out an object from his clothing.

"This is for you."

—It was a letter.

The old guy handed the letter to Rias. Rias carefully received the letter in her hands.

"…T-This is…?"

"—It's a challenge letter. We want to formally make a challenge to you guys."

"—Uh!?"

Hearing his announcement, we were shocked! Of course! Because this was the person himself, alone, giving us a challenge letter! This guy must be really courageous, heroic, or not value his life at all to come here declaring a challenge alone! What happened was far too sudden, and everyone's face was tense!

Rias's body was shaking, her anger was about to explode!

"You've got to be joking. Do you even know what the current situation is right now? Even if you're one of the high ranking people in the Church—"

Before she could finish speaking, there was an index finger right in front of her! The old man turned his finger left and right, while his mouth made a tsk-tsk-tsk sound.

"The Maou's younger sister. —Is really young, too young in fact."

……Whoa! Seeing this old man's attitude, I couldn't stand it anymore, and got in between them! I stood in front of Rias to protect her! I then faced the other side to speak!

"…I won't let you touch this person, no matter who you are!"

Hearing this, the old man paused for a moment — but very quickly revealed an extremely satisfied smile. His enormous hand approached me — and heartily rubbed my head.

"…Not a bad look, young devil."

……Uh!

I felt that I was being belittled, so I smacked his hand away! —But, the old man had already disappeared from sight at some point, and moved to a spot a considerable distance away! …Again there were no signs of his movement that could be detected! Is he moving at a high speed? Can he make people feel as though there's no scent or sound?

The old man turned to face a certain direction and said

"—Very well, Your Eminence Legrenzi, please make your declaration."

After he finished speaking, a small figure appeared—.

It was a black-haired boy who appears to be the size of a fifth or sixth grade elementary student. Although he had a childlike face, he had a majestic presence. Furthermore, he was clothed in the same vestments as Vasco Strada. The old man addressed him as [Your Eminence][141]. From the looks of it, that boy at his age already has a position which deserves such an address.

Perhaps aware of this, Rias asked the boy

"You're Teodoro Legrenzi?"

"That is correct, I am Teodoro Legrenzi."

The boy nodded his head, and replied with certainty!

…What is this! One of the people behind the rebellion, whose identity was said to be a mysterious high ranking person…it was inconceivable that it would be an eleven or twelve year old boy!

My companions had the same reaction as me, upon knowing the boys identity, we couldn't hide our surprise.

The young Cardinal's body was shaking nervously, but he spoke in loud voice!

"I…need to protect the rights and views of the exorcists! Although you are 'good' devils, there is also a need to eradicate the evil devils and vampires! To unilaterally deprive them of judgement for their sins — I cannot accept this! Even if this goes against Archangel Michael-sama's will…only this, only this I cannot accept!"

Although the boy was trembling, his eyes maintained a strong sense of determination.

As if in response to his words, we became surrounded by a myriad of warriors who emerged, and prevented our escape. Looking closely, there were male priests, as well as female warriors who wore uniforms similar to that of Xenovia and Irina, there were many of them, thus surrounding us. …They were probably the warriors who were following the people such as the Cardinals in the rebellion. I could also see several white-haired priests. …They were probably warriors who came from the same organisation that Freed previously belonged to. Seeing them, I couldn't help thinking about that guy and Siegfried.

Just from those that I could see, there were more than a dozen warriors here. To be able to bring so many people here, certainly wasn't an easy feat…. To be honest, I thought that all that was needed to become an outsider was to step outside Kuoh town.

…I can't stand it, every time we venture far, we get attacked, there's no stopping it. I want to ask whether we really have any freedom or not.

Among us, the first to ready their weapon — was Xenovia. She seemed to have controlled her trembling, and removed Durandal from the other dimension, holding it in her hands.

Xenovia pointed the sword at Vasco Strada.

"…Your Eminence Strada."

The old man's wrinkled face showed a slight smile.

“Warrior Xenovia, are you able to use Durandal well?”

This sentence seemed to have lit her fuse, and Xenovia charged forwards with Durandal!

“See for yourself, actions speak louder than words. This is what Durandal’s wielder should be like!”

The old priest did not seem to have the intention to evade, and prepared to take Xenovia’s attack head on! Ex-Durandal’s blade was carrying an immense amount of holy energy, and if this one hit was received entirely, no one could possibly remain unscratched! The attack landed — in an instant! Xenovia’s strike was stopped! She maintained her swinging posture motionlessly. No, she couldn’t move at all! —Because Vasco Strada, had used one finger to block Durandal!

…That can’t be real! To actually use a single finger to block Xenovia’s attack!? Even if it was a devil with a considerable amount of skill and training, they wouldn’t be able to do something like that!? Moreover, the opponent is a human, an old guy over the age of eighty!

“—Ugh!”

Seeing this result, Xenovia was bitterly gritting her teeth.

“It looks like you’re far from it.”

Vasco Strada shook his head. …The aura covering Durandal was gradually disappearing! This old guy was the previous wielder, so he should be very familiar with how to control Durandal. However, was one finger all that was required to do this!?

Seeing this situation, I really wanted to support Xenovia, but the warriors surrounding us were still watching us, and most importantly, I couldn’t see a single opening on that old guy’s body! If we could use a large area to attack, it should be possible to overcome this situation. But this was a residential street. It was impossible to do anything more extreme than that! It looks like my companions were doing the same as me, they didn’t know how they should attack!

“Xenovia! Your Excellency! Forgive me for being rude!”

Charging like her friend, Irina spread her white wings, and rushed towards the opponent at high speed! Held in her hand was the holy sword Hauteclere! Just before her attack was about to hit the old priest, a figure inserted itself between the two! It was a black-haired, middle-aged man dressed in vestments, he was resisting Irina’s attack head on!

Seeing the person who was blocking her attack, Irina was astonished!

“—Uh! Cristaldi-sensei!”

The man that Irina addressed was holding a sword which was capable of emitting a holy aura. It was that sword which was currently blocking Irina’s Hauteclere. Cristaldi—. That was definitely what Irina called him. It looks like this middle-aged man was the third person behind the rebellion — Ewald Cristaldi! He was the famous previous wielder of Excalibur!

Ewald Cristaldi used the weapon in his hands to push Irina back, then he said

“…Warrior Irina, you shouldn’t limit your vision so narrowly.”

…This man’s body also didn’t appear to have any openings.

—But, there was one person, who rushed towards him with a sword!

“The previous wielder of Excalibur…!”

It was Kiba! He was wielding a holy-demonic sword, pointing it at Ewald Cristaldi!

“Come on! Let’s decide this!”

With a single breath, he quickly closed the distance between the two of them, and dashed towards the person who was known as the Church warriors’ teacher! The opponent turned to face Kiba’s high speed attack — barely evading it by twisting his body! It was a body twist that had no wasteful movements! Kiba continued attacking whilst mixing in some feints, even producing afterimages whilst

attacking non-stop, but this still seemed to be within the expectations of Ewald Cristaldi and he used his sword to fend off the attacks! My eyes couldn't even keep up with that man's sword movements!

This can't be real! Not only is he able to keep up high speed combat with Kiba, he's actually able to evade as well!? Even during combat training, I had no way of blocking all of Kiba's attacks!

That man spoke whilst he was evading Kiba's attacks

"Holy-demonic swords? So you're the survivor of the Holy Sword Project? Your movements aren't bad."

He fiercely swung his sword! Receiving this blow, Kiba suddenly fell onto the pavement! The aftermath of that attack destroyed the road, producing a crater!

"Agh…uh!"

Kiba seemed to have difficulty breathing and the sounds of his groaning could be heard!

"—But, if you're comparing me to someone lowly like Freed, I will be very difficult you know?"

Ewald Cristaldi gave him a glance, then sheathed his sword.

…I'm just guessing, that sword…is it somehow related to Excalibur? I remember that kind of high speed sword movement and the destructive power dealt to Kiba's body. That's right, it's exactly the same ability as Excalibur.

"Kiba, Xenovia, Irina!"

Just when Rias and I had made up our minds, ready to step forward, Vasco Strada made a gesture towards us, beckoning us to stop.

"Princess of the Gremory family, we came here, not to start a war, but to make a final announcement. I hope you can understand this."

Once the old man said this — the warriors who were surrounding us silently withdrew.

“…So, it would be best if we put away our weapons.”

Seeing this, Rias stopped walking, and responded. The previous wielder of Durandal — Vasco Strada, the previous Excalibur wielder — Ewald Cristaldi, and the young Cardinal all turned around together in preparation to leave.

“—Let us say goodbye, young warriors.”

After simply saying this, the group of rebels left—.

“……Uhh”

Xenovia didn’t make a sound, holding on to Durandal while she appeared to be upset.

“…Why, would conflict arise between their own people.”

Irina looked depressed, sitting on the floor.

“…Damn it.”

After challenging the wielder of Excalibur and being easily defeated, Kiba expressed his feelings, heavily punching the ground with his fist. …The battle of people related to holy swords was about to begin again.

Notes

1. A grunt of acknowledgement.
2. Onomatopoeia for exhaling / breathing.
3. This is a reference to “The Rose of Versailles”.
4. A Chinese proverb. Similar to “Clothes maketh the man”.
5. Okaa-sama: Respectful way to address one’s own mother.
6. In a traditional sense, a bishop is the highest ranking below the Pope; they are the head of a church who oversees the priests and deacons. A priest is usually involved in teaching and governing, but not as highly

ranked as a bishop. A deacon is an assistant to a bishop who is involved in some teaching and administration. Cardinal is an honorary term meaning a senior or elder.

7. Roland is the famous wielder of Durandal recorded in legends who is said to have single-handedly defeated thousands of enemies in battle.

8. –jisan: old man.

9. Desumasuchō means “polite tone”.

10. Kouhai-tachi: Group of juniors.

11. Taiyaki is a fish shaped cake usually with a sweet stuffing inside.

12. Vestments: The liturgical garments worn by the clergy.

13. Buon Giourno: Italian for hello / good day.

14. This honorific is for high ranking religious officials.

Life.2
Various Decisive Battles!

Part 1

That night—.

The members of [DxD] were gathered in the VIP room of the Hyoudou household. Gathered here at the location which was also their base were the Occult Research Club, as well as the Student Council, Sister Griselda, Dulio and others.

[…I'm terribly sorry. To have you repeatedly get involved in matters related to us….]

Michael-san was communicating via a three dimensional projection from a magic circle. The first thing that came out of Michael-san's mouth was an apology. It was probably because of last time's incident in Heaven and this time's matter with the Church's rebellion.

[Their request is to have a battle against [DxD]. And they especially hope to have a fight against you guys in Kuoh town.]

Michael-san said.

"Why do they want it here…?"

Azazel-sensei replied to my question.

"…This is the birthplace of the alliance between the people from

various factions. They probably have very complicated feelings about this place. Then, you guys also currently have an inseparable relationship to this matter. It's also a bit like revenge, but, from their perspective, [DxD] is definitely an extremely complex and hated opponent."

So it means that if there was no alliance, the job of the exorcists wouldn't be restricted. We've been related to the incident with Kokabiel as well as the Peace Treaty between the Three Factions, and more importantly, we're members of [DxD] which stands as a symbol of the alliance. …I see, so that's why they say that there's no more suitable enemy for the Church's rebellion than us.

Sister Griselda said

"…The people involved in this rebellion are mostly…those whose families were killed by Devils or Vampires, or those who have had their lives destroyed by those people. In the past, they wanted revenge or to prevent a recurrence of the tragedy which has befallen the Church's warriors—. When the Three Factions formed an alliance, the greatest opposition to it was from them or the high ranking officials of the Church supporting them."

…Those who saw the lives of their loved ones taken away by the Devils or Vampires, they couldn't accept the alliance. This rebellion was started with this sentiment as its core…. There was an indescribable feeling in my heart….

Irina said with a sorrowful expression

"Although some of them have defected to join other organisations, most of them are still devout followers of Christianity. …Although they believe in God, they're still unsatisfied."

"…It's said that their displeasure finally erupted. That's the reason behind the rebellion…"

Irina nodded after hearing what I said.

Sensei said with a sigh

"…To be blunt, this incident is an internal strife. Although I really want

to call upon the members of [DxD], Seekvaira Agares and Sairaorg Bael for assistance, protecting their own territory is their obligation. It would be best to say that if we were going up against Qlippoth, then that would be the time to call over the heirs of the Great King and Archduke families, and that side's old men in the upper echelons estimate that it will be complicated again…."

That…could be possible. Although an alliance was formed, the Underworld's side might not stop blaming Heaven's side for this incident, and if even the heirs of the Great King and Archduke family were sent over as well, those stubborn seniors definitely won't be pleased. Simply by explaining the situation to them, Seekvaira Agares and Sairaorg Bael would probably come to help out, but just as Sensei said, maintaining their own territory is extremely important. There's also the need to guard against Qlippoth who may take advantage of this rebellion to attack the Underworld.

Michael-san said with a serious look

[…The fundamental reason for this is because our management is poor. I will use our power—.]

"Hold on, don't act so rashly."

Sensei interrupted Michael-san.

"Michael, you should be a symbol of Heaven. I think that giving strict orders is also the responsibility of a leader. —But, this matter is what you'd call a conflict. Even if there are complicated reasons, using force to coerce people won't solve the problem. Since it's like this, this incident should be handled cleanly."

[But, Azazel. Handing this matter over entirely to [DxD] is….]

"I'm slightly worried. I don't think Strada or Cristaldi would put all their burdens onto their students just to start this rebellion. That is to say, they're using so many people who have trained as warriors, who probably think like this. As someone who has always directed people, how much have you noticed?"

[…I've watched them grow up, and I'm certain that they are all devout believers. They are very innocent people, and they deeply

care about humanity. That's why I believe that their way of thinking is very direct, they won't go around in loops….]

…They said that this rebellion was being led by the high ranking members of the Church. It looks like Azazel-sensei and Michael-san seemed to have realised what those people were thinking. So, this was just a pointless argument which was slightly irrational…. There was also that boy—. To be at the top at such a young age was certainly surprising, but at the same time, the fact that he is also the mastermind behind the rebellion was quite concerning…. Perhaps, he could be the key to this situation?

Then, Michael-san spoke as if he had read what was on my mind.

[…There is also the young Cardinal, Teodoro Legrenzi, who has the greatest abilities among the 'Miracle Children'. That's the reason why he has been given that position at such a young age.]

…'Miracle Children'? Everyone except me seemed to know about it. Sensei explained to me

"…'Miracle Children', they are the hybrid of Angels and humans."

—! …So it was that. The hybrid of Angels and humans whose existence was originally thought to be impossible. If Angels had desires, then they would fall. In relation to humans, a vast number of Angels became immersed in ecstasy with them, turning into Fallen Angels. The majority of Fallen Angels in the Grigori were former angels who fell because of their desires. But only through special ceremonies and certain enchantments were Angels able to engage in lovemaking with humans. At that time, both sides won't indulge in lust, but only pure love XXOO. …I've thought about it in the past, that if it was myself, I definitely would've thought about something perverted, so that would probably be out of the question, but anyway, Angel and human hybrids actually exist.

Michael-san suddenly looked at Irina and I then asked

[…Although asking at this time is probably a bit inappropriate, did you use it? Last time's room. I never imagined that I'd be looking forward to it….]

——! A-Asking this kind of inappropriate question at such a time, Archangel-sama! Both Irina's and my face were completely red. What exactly were you looking forward to, Archangel-sama!?

But Irina actually endured the shame and responded to her superior!

"I-It's only a matter of time!"

What kinds of words are you saying!? You're telling me it's only a matter of time!? Where does your self-confidence come from!? C-Could Irina be talking about all the things that she did to me after Christmas!? That girl Irina, ever since she received that doorknob, she's been calculating my moves wherever I go! For example, when I went to an empty room upstairs in the Hyoudou household to construct a model, as soon as I walked through the door, I had somehow entered that baby-making room from last time!!!! Irina had calculated my actions beforehand, and changed the doorknob to become the 'The baby-making room's doorknob'! Then Irina said things like this as soon as I entered!

"Ara, Ise-kun. What is it? If you have any problems, I'll help you solve them! …T-This not a problem right? I think that if we're in here, Michael-sama won't be able to see…. …W-We're childhood friends after all, s-so kissing is only natural…going a step further, isn't strange right…? B-Because, we're childhood friends…"

There was more to it besides talking, sometimes wearing a swimming suit, sometimes wearing gym clothes, she would ask me to come over! A-Although it really made me feel appreciative…, because of the surprise, sometimes I would loudly scream [Waa!] when things related to the doorknob occurred. In the end, even when I was in the bathroom, I began to keep a close eye on the bathroom's doorknob! I should at least have some freedom when I'm trying to use the toilet!

Most recently, Asia and Xenovia began to borrow the baby-making room, making it a shared object. Sometimes, if I opened a door with my guard down, I would see the Church Trio wearing all sorts of costumes, with drinks and snacks laid out like a cosplay pub awaiting me! At that time, their greeting would even become

[Welcome!]![2]

Hence, I always inspected the doorknob before going through a door every time now. …Although I really appreciate them doing these sorts of things, when the Church Trio creates such situations and uses methods to tempt me, I don't know how I should react! It's too difficult for an inexperienced young male like me!

[That would be good.]

After hearing Irina's report, Michael-san was nodding with satisfaction! This is somewhat off-topic, Archangel and your Ace!

Disregarding the confused me, Sensei said

"That's the situation. I'm sorry, please accept the challenge of those guys. Basically, help clean things up with Heaven and the Church. I'm sorry for making you draw the short straw.[3]"

Not only sensei, but even Michael-san was expressing his deepest apologies saying [I'm very sorry.]. Seeing as both of these people who acted as leaders were showing such expressions whilst making this request, it left us with no other choice.

Rias calmly smiled.

"At that time, not only were we fighting against Kokabiel, we were also involved in the matter. Even if we don't have the assistance of Seekvaira Agares or Sairaorg Bael, it won't be a problem. The most important thing is that, since we've received a challenge, we need to accept it."

Sona-zenkaichou stood next to Rias, saying

"We also accept this challenge. As long as we're attending classes at this town's school, this is not something that can be ignored. In addition, we were also involved in the fight with Kokabiel and the meeting of the Three Factions."

Irina also raised her hand with a bitter expression.

"Michael-sama, can I join in? As one of Rias-san's companions—."

[Of course. You also need to work hard, Irina. Blame me for being useless….]

Michael-san truly seemed to be ashamed, but Dulio laughed loudly and shook his head.

“Ah, I said you don’t need to worry Michael-sama. Things like this can happen. To change something it means that, at the same time, there will be a sacrifice, so there are definitely people who will be unhappy.”

Hearing this, Sister Griselda couldn’t help saying

“You actually said something that’s fitting for a leader…you’ve grown up, Dulio.”

“Nee-san, if you give me even more positive feedback then I’ll be very happy….”

Dulio gloomily said. N-No, I think that your opinion showed the qualities of a leader!

“So not only Irina, but Dulio and Griselda-san as well?”

Hearing my question, both Dulio and Sister Griselda expressed their agreement.

“That’s right, with me and Dulio included, those from Heaven’s side who work here, and everyone on the Church’s side supporting us as well. This also shows that there are a lot of people who support the alliance.”

——.

…Those words sound very reassuring. Yes, there were people who recognised the alliance even within the Church! There were also people like that among the Devils and Fallen Angels…, so there were definitely also people who recognised and agreed with peace in the other factions! Exactly because of this, we formed [DxD]!

By now, I’ve certainly come to understand just how important these things are.

“Azazel, what about Vali’s Team?”

Rias asked Azazel about Vali’s current situation.

“Couldn’t be contacted. They’re probably acting on their own. But with the current situation, if they were involved, it would actually become more troublesome.”

“Hmm, I’m worried about asking. If he comes along, it may turn into a real fight.”

“Kuroka and Le Fay are at your place, if you want to use them, just let them know. Don’t let them turn into leeches.”

That’s right. Besides Le Fay who helps out the Hyoudou household by doing housework, the complete freeloader Kuroka doesn’t help out at all when things happen! That bad cat, every time I tell her this, she says [Then you can use my body as payment nya♪] then undresses to hug me…although it does make me very happy! But this time I have to make her work hard! …Although I’m saying this, I really want her to use her body as payment!

Sensei summarised the matter at hand.

“Well, let me sum up. This time, the people who will accept the rebellion group’s request for a challenge are Rias’s group, Sona’s group, and [DxD]’s [Brave Saints] group. There should be no problems there. I will head over to the other side to let Seekvaira Agares and Sairaorg Bael know about the current situation.”

That’s easy to understand. We’ll be using the members who are close to Kuoh town to handle this matter.

“Also, I will have Slash Dog to act as support behind the scenes. Well, if it’s him then he should do his job well.”

—Sensei said. Oh, Ikuse-san will be responsible for working behind the scenes. So even if Qlippoth were to appear in the midst of this, it shouldn’t turn into a dangerous situation.

After things had settled down, Sister Griselda said

“Although saying this might be a bit vague, His Eminence Strada and

His Eminence Cristaldi's true strength is like twice that of Dulio's."

…This information wouldn't make people happy! That old man and that ossan [141] are on the level of Dulio times two! They were respectively the former wielders of Durandal and Excalibur, they were also known to be the best, but I didn't expect this!

Dulio smiled as he patted me on the back.

"Ah, hahaha. Ise-kun, that old man and ossan are extremely strong, we need to be careful."

…Aw, [DxD] is really unlucky. However, fighting against allies, I still felt a sense of hesitation. …Differing values between each species. The effect of the internal strife. Although I'm currently a devil, I was previously a human. Perhaps from the moment that I changed species…in their perspective, I became someone that shouldn't exist….

…I glanced over at the worrisome Swordsman Trio. Whether it was Xenovia, Irina or Kiba, their faces all showed very complicated expressions.

After receiving the challenge, we began to decide on the day.

The challenge would be — in three days' time.

Part 2

Having said that, although it was only a few days, a lot of things happened between the members of the Gremory household.

Two days later, someone came to visit us — it was Tannin-ossan! This was a surprise visitor!

Tannin-ossan in his mini-dragon form had travelled here via magic circle to the Hyoudou house's underground. As soon as ossan arrived he said

“In fact, I came here for your assistance.”

That’s right, ossan who I rarely see came here for our assistance. I heard that it was about something related to a rare dragon race.

Ossan explained to us

“My role is mainly for the sake of the dragons that come from the human world seeking peace…. And there’s one in particular called [Spectre Dragon] which is a rare species. It recently laid eggs.”

Oh, laid eggs. That’s a cause for celebration.

—While I was nodding as I listened to him, another person beside me was startled. Then everyone also jumped in surprise.

Rias frantically said

“—Spectre Dragon!? I heard that there were very few of them left.”

In other words, it is a very rare species of dragon.

Tannin-ossan expressed his agreement.

“That’s right. That’s why the egg which has been laid provides a lot of hope. …However, the incubation and hatching of [Spectre Dragon] eggs are very difficult. In particular, the Underworld’s environment has a bad effect on the egg of a [Spectre Dragon]. If this goes on, the egg may decay before it is able to hatch.”

That is not a good thing. …Ah, I think I have an idea for the reason why ossan came here.

Ossan continued

“I would like to ask of you, Rias, to borrow and use the area under Kuoh town.”

Oh, I see. But there are often enemies who attack here, so I can’t say that it’s very peaceful.

“Is that alright? Qlippoth might be keeping an eye on this place right?”

Hearing my question, ossan scratched his chin with his finger.

“Hmm, it’s because I couldn’t find a more suitable place in the human world than here. If it was anywhere else, then I can’t guarantee that Qlippoth won’t go after the egg. In that case, I think that since we know there are dangers, until the time that the egg hatches, it would be best to keep the egg at a secret location deep underground, protected by several layers of magical barriers.”

Rias then asked

“How long will it take to hatch?”

“If it’s in the human world, it should be faster than expected. The Spectre Dragon’s egg has already been in a location which is not ideal prior to this.”

In that case, it would be best to move the egg over here as soon as possible. Otherwise, the environment of the Underworld may have an adverse effect on the child.

After hearing this, Rias spoke to express her agreement

“I understand. Then we will do our best to protect it.”

“I’m sorry. Thanks in advance.”

After both sides agreed, all that was left was to wait for the person who would be bringing the egg over.

After waiting for a while, the silhouette of a person illuminated by light from the magic circle appeared, holding a large egg which glowed with a shining lustre.

“….”

It was a man wearing a black coat, silently holding the egg. We were shocked to see him!

“—! Crom Cruach! Why is it you!?”

I pointed at the man with my finger as I called out his name! I never imagined that the person bringing the Spectre Dragon egg over would be this legendary evil dragon! As soon as this person was

seen, everyone assumed a battle stance!

However, Tannin-ossan shouted [Slow down.] and moved in between us. Ossan scratched his face then told us something which was very surprising.

“…Hmm, it’s a long story…but Crom Cruach is currently my guest.”

“Eeeeeeeeeeeeeeehhh!?”

I yelled out loud! W-Who would’ve thought! T-This evil dragon, would actually stay under ossan’s command!

The evil dragon didn’t even care about our surprised stares, and calmly said

“…I’m currently being taken care of by Tannin. This is simply in return for that.”

…N-N-N-No. Come on, everything that comes out of this guy’s mouth is strange! Tannin-ossan is providing him with food, clothing and shelter, in return for him to transport the egg, and then coming to our place! All of this seems like a lie!

Tannin-ossan spoke again

“Crom Cruach is an evil dragon. He was also previously serving under Evil God Balor[151]. But he is also a pure dragon. I think that since he is a dragon, then there is a way to understand each other.”

Crom Cruach silently nodded. …Ara, that is to say that he fled from Heaven to the Underworld, then encountered Tannin-ossan, and those two were able to get along?

[Although he seems to be better than the other evil dragons, you should still be careful.]

Ddraig reminded Tannin.

“Hmm, I’ll keep that in mind. But—.”

Tannin-ossan turned his gaze towards Crom. Then Crom Cruach — spoke about the unthinkable, he came to my place for our mascot, to

confront Ophis!

Aaaaaaaaaaaahhh! This could turn into a disaster! There exists nothing more frightening than the meeting between an unsurpassed evil dragon and pure Dragon God in this world! If things aren't handled well, this house will even be blown apart aaaaaaaahh!

Crom Cruach ignored us with an expressionless face, placed the egg on the floor, and then made a battle stance towards Ophis.

"Ophis. Fight with me."

The Dragon God-sama held a banana in one hand and said to him

"I, made a promise with Ise that I would not fight. Impossible."

Crom Cruach didn't expect that he would be rejected so quickly, and widened his eyes in surprise.

"…Really? Then, what needs to be done for it to be possible?"

"Don't know."

"…Indeed."

After speaking, Crom Cruach fell silent, and picked the egg up again. Ophis very curiously kept touching the egg.

…H-How, what was going on in this puzzling situation…. The evil dragon appeared, challenged Ophis, was rejected, and then he accepted that…?

Tannin-ossan found it very funny and laughed [Kukuku.]….

"You see, there's nothing to worry about."

…This, I don't know what to say about it. I totally can't understand what this evil dragon Crom Cruach is thinking! This guy's way of thinking is even more difficult to understand than Ophis!

—Speaking of which, Tannin-ossan was not surprised to see Ophis.

"Ossan, you know Ophis…."

I wanted to confirm, then ossan immediately nodded.

“Hmm. Maou-dono [161] told me about it. I won’t tell anyone. Just knowing that the Dragon God is here with you, I can rest assured.”

That really is quite a relief. As much as possible, I didn’t want Ophis to come into contact with other things. She was very dangerous to begin with, so I didn’t want her to become any more conspicuous.

Then Tannin-ossan began to talk about Crom Cruach.

“…Crom Cruach’s eyes, they have seen too many things which have occurred in the human world. I also have not been sealed, and even now I continue to watch the world. I feel like I can understand his feelings. As the times change, human culture changes, good and evil change, accompanied by the change in devils…after watching this for years, even if you are a powerful dragon, your values will waver.”

…These words were quite convincing. In fact, it looks like Ophis has only had little contact with us, yet she has become like this now. … All those who are called dragons, perhaps the stronger they are, the purer they are. However, there are also those like Grendel, dragons who are rotten to their core.

Tannin-ossan continued

“Anyway, Crom Cruach appears to be interested in my observations of dragons over time. There have been a lot of species of dragons which I’ve brought over. I’m sorry, Hyoudou Issei, members of the Gremory household, I hope that you don’t publicise this matter. I want to continue watching him for some time.”

…Perhaps Tannin-ossan wants to find something from this evil dragon. For even ossan to say this, one could guess that he hopes to get something out of it. Ossan was my mentor. After sharing such a bond, I wouldn’t doubt him.

“I know. I trust you ossan. After all ossan, you’re the Dragon King that I think is ideal.”

Hearing what I just said, ossan timidly scratched his face.

Rias followed by saying

“Understood. Please entrust the Spectre Dragon’s egg to us. If we find that there are any signs of decay then we’ll contact you straight away.”

Hearing what Rias said, ossan replied

“I’m very grateful.”

Like that, the unexpected visit was peacefully concluded. The location for the egg’s safekeeping was chosen to be the underground space below Kuoh town which was the most difficult to access. …However, just knowing that there’s hope for us to have a mutual understanding with evil dragons is an achievement. Although I think that this is mostly thanks to Tannin-ossan’s idea…. Even so, it’s possible to talk with Crom Cruach. I believe that it’s also possible for us to have a mutual understanding with the warriors of the Church’s rebellion.

This event makes me have a strong feeling about it.

Part 3

A day later—.

The showdown against the Church’s warriors was tomorrow. On this day, Xenovia was using one of the classrooms in the old school building, within which she was deciding what her Election Day speech would be about.

After the discussion with the New Occult Research Club, Asia and I had somehow ended up at this classroom.

“Um-, the reason I’m running in the Student Council Election is….”

Xenovia was slowly reading her speech, almost about to put it down. Irina and Kiryuu were next to her holding the speech in one hand as they discussed their opinions on it.

“I think that, compared to the usual conventions, perhaps being a bit bold, using humour is also feasible.”

“I think that an action style would be even better than trying comedy. Prepare a target, and then Xenovia will slice it cleanly in half! It’s sure to catch people’s attention!”

…Kiryuu and Irina were both talking about something. Xenovia wasn’t paying any attention to them and simply stared at her speech.

Asia also joined into their conversation, thus turning it into a decent election discussion. The main point of that day’s speech, the importance of commitment, a predetermined order to speak about things, everyone put in their best effort to contribute with their ideas. After most things had been settled, we took a break.

I walked up to Kiryuu who was preparing tea, and spoke to her.

“Hey, Kiryuu.”

“What, you’re so serious. It’s not really like you.”

I think that she already knows the truth right now, so I wanted to ask her.

“…A devil is here at this school as the Student Council President, isn’t it a bit strange?”

The school at which a devil is the Student Council President—. That was Kuoh Acacdemy. The majority of students went about their daily lives not knowing a single thing about this. I suddenly wanted to know what Kiryuu thought after she had learned about the truth.

After all, she was currently helping Xenovia in her campaign for Student Council President. This also means that the next President could possibly be a devil.

Kiryuu sighed.

“Speaking of which, you know, the existence of devils itself is something which defies common sense. Really, this magic stuff is way too exaggerated.”

That…was what was said. From what she said, it was certain that she didn't know what to say.

Kiryuu held her chin with her fingers and after some thought she said

"But, that stuff…. There's no reason why it can't be possible right? There are one or two such schools yet Hanakai and Xenovia aren't trying to confine or eat us, they're not dictating the school, nor are they trying to lure us into darkness right? That being the case, isn't there no difference between us and any other ordinary student? Humans and devils may be different species, but they quintessentially still follow the same principles and values as human society. We should say that we need to be stronger, or that we should be thankful. Anyway, perhaps the devils that are powerful in comparison to humans will come to protect us in a dire situation. I think that is highly possible."

——.

…So this is what she thought, what she just said…left me feeling amazed.

Kiryuu continued.

"In addition, both Xenovia and Asia are my friends. Even if I know about their identity, nothing has changed. At least I think so. Besides, I also thought that you never stopped being a pervert. This doesn't matter, I will still continue here as a student."

She must have said what she truly felt in her heart. Although you have to keep in mind that she was able to accept the truth to begin with. But I think that there's no doubt that she meant what she just said.

Because of this. I believe that what she just said was a gesture of kindness to accept me, in which case we….

…Not good, my eyes are wet. It's because I've recently been thinking about the reason for the existence of devils, and too many things like conflicts have been happening.

I don't know if Kiryuu had noticed my current appearance, but she

made a mischievous looking smile then poked my face with her finger.

“What are you hesitating about. It’s not like you at all. So I’ll say this to you. I recognize you and Asia.”

“Ah, thank you.”

“You’re overthinking things. People can be good or bad, devils are the same, isn’t that so? It’s the same no matter where you are in this world, right? I don’t want to say this to you as a Japanese person, but you’re looking at things too pessimistically.”

Kiryuu spoke normally, but to me right now, such ordinary words were making me feel incredible joy. I felt moved by the fact that she called me a Japanese person.

“For that, thank you so much. I feel like you’ve helped me up.”

“This is too exaggerated.”

Kiryuu smiled wryly. I made another request of her.

“Xenovia will be depending on you then.”

Kiryuu puffed out her chest and did made a thumbs up pose.

“Leave it to me. I’ll do my best.”

Ah, in this regard you’re full of enthusiasm. These were the words that Kiryuu said to me.

—I was formerly a human who is now a devil. I live in Kuoh town, I’m a student of Kuoh Academy, and most importantly, I look forward to peace. I only want to live a peaceful life. Nothing more.

I want to hold this feeling in my heart, as I take on tomorrow’s battle.

That day late at night, I was alone in the underground swimming pool of the Hyoudou household.

The battle was tomorrow, so I came to the pool to perform my final preparations. I wasn’t wearing armour, with only a bare upper body, I had released my dragon wings and I was flying above the pool. I

was floating in mid-air, silently allowing energy to wrap itself around my body.

This is what I've recently been doing, mental purification. Although training the body isn't bad, training the mind shouldn't be neglected. This is because it can allow a person to quietly think about a lot of things. Meditating while flying in mid-air is even better. I dimmed the room's lights down to their lowest setting, as this environment made it the easiest to concentrate.

…Flying was previously quite difficult, but now I could do it even without wearing my armour. Speaking of which, I meant that I wasn't using a devils' wings, they were dragon wings. Although I'm able to bring out my devil wings, my compatibility with dragon wings seems much better, as I didn't think that I'd be able to fly so easily.

…Currently I was able to use my dragon wings without wearing my armour. This means that my current body is no longer the same as the body I had before. This, I already understood very well. But each time I realised that my body had changed without me noticing, I couldn't help thinking about it.

…My previous body has already been destroyed as a result of Samael's poison. My current body was born from the flesh of Great Red. Of course, Ophis also helped make my body function like a human's…but most of it was still a dragon's body. After that I reincarnated as a devil again…. Although my body has changed, my mind hasn't, it really is quite a strange feeling. Although Azazel-sensei replaced a part of his body with a mechanical part, I still don't feel that it's very useful. Right now, the only change in my body that I could feel was that I had dragon wings on my back.

Ddraig said

[Your body was made by Great Red, and it has also inherited Ophis's power. It will probably bring about an unprecedented change, and it may also contain an unbelievable hidden potential.]

In other words, even a dragon didn't know what would become of it in the future.

[Ah, yes. This thing, although it is worrying, it was also interesting. No, just let it be. To this day, we've overcome an innumerable number of crises.]

I listened to him as he talked about this. …No, but peace comes first. It would be the best if everyone could understand each other….

[Whether it's a human, a devil or a dragon, their upbringing will be different, and so will their values and experiences. There will naturally be some disagreements. You can only hope the grudges between each species won't grow even larger.]

Hmm, although you can say that, we're always going against other people. Thinking about these things is inevitable…. Although peace and an alliance have been achieved, there will still be places where disarray arises, and it will unknowingly accumulate until it breaks out…. And I think that in principle, the [Khaos Brigade]'s Old Maou Faction, Hero Faction, Qlippoth, and this current situation are all the same….

"This is what you may call peace, but there are people who have suffered as a result…."

What Vali said to me has constantly been on my mind. It'll probably be something that I'll continue to ponder about….

I quickly patted my face. …I've got to cheer up. After all, the battle was tomorrow.

"We accepted the challenge. Simply put, it's a conflict. I — don't want everything I've done till now to be wrong, so we accepted their challenge!"

Yes, that's it! What I've been fighting for isn't wrong! I need to sustain this belief when I take on tomorrow's challenge!

[This is fine, it's too early for a kid like you to start doubting your own path. Say that after you've lived another hundred years. If you need to question your own path, it's not too late to do it later.]

Oh yeah, Ddraig. I must first continue without regrets. I need to take the path that I believe in to the end! Because I'm going to become a

harem king!

After I had steeled my determination, I moved over to the side of the pool. Then, it seemed like someone entered the pool.

“Huh? Ise?”

It was Xenovia who was wearing only a T-shirt.

“So it’s you. What are you still doing here so late?”

Xenovia made a wry smile when she heard my question.

“Nothing really, I just wanted to come here. I wanted to go for a swim. Did I disturb you?”

“Of course not, I was just about to leave.”

“I see.”

After saying this, Xenovia headed over to the diving platform — then haughtily took off her T-shirt! She was wearing nothing underneath so she was completely naked! Not even wearing underwear!

Her tight and curvaceous body, which was well proportioned, was visible in the dim lighting! The shape of her oppai was so beautiful!

“—Hey, you swim naked!?”

Although I said that with sarcasm, Xenovia didn’t care at all, and climbed onto the diving platform to make a diving pose! My gaze was attracted to her bottom, and then Xenovia jumped in!

She was swimming through the pool freestyle. Then Xenovia said to me

“Swimming nude feels very unrestrictive you know? Sometimes I come here by myself late at night for a swim!”

Xenovia swam around three laps in the spacious pool, and then lifted her head out at the edge of the pool.

“…Ise.”

“Hmm?”

She suddenly asked me seriously

“…I, can surpass them right? Surpass Sona-kaichou, and surpass His Excellency Strada right?”

The opponents that Xenovia had to beat. Both of them were strong opponents.

Xenovia continued

“I…I’ve always thought that, if it’s going to be done, then it has to be able to surpass the predecessor. Whether it’s as a warrior, or as a student of Kuoh Academy.”

Although she was saying the things that made her feel uneasy, her eyes possessed a strong determination. This was proof that she had the mentality of ‘if I’m going to do it, I’ve got to win’.

“That reminds me, I haven’t asked. The reason why you want to become the Student Council President.”

Although things had already progressed to this stage, I still asked this question. Because this girl wasn’t the type to speak about it with initiative. She was the type who didn’t discuss things beforehand, the type who would decide on things without you knowing.

Xenovia became silent for a while, then answered

“…This is the first school that I’ve attended since I was born. Since I started attending school here, I’ve never felt bored. Chatting with classmates during class, in breaks, club activities, class activities, school trips, all of them are very new and exciting to me, I’m truly very happy. Ise, I, really like this school. I truly think that it’s possible to have such a meaningful place in this world. So, I…want to give something back in return. No, I want to leave something behind at this school. That’s why I naturally thought about becoming the Student Council President, to give my all for the school.”

…I see. She really likes Kuoh Academy. Indeed, this girl is always so active at this school. She enjoys anything that she does. No matter whether it’s attending class, engaging in activities or chatting during breaks. Xenovia’s always been doing her best to enjoy all

this.

Speaking of which, Xenovia seemed to have understood something.

“…Oh, now I get it. It would be good to say this to everyone. There’s basically nothing difficult to understand in this situation. Regardless of what’s said, there’s still the battle—.”

Xenovia looked up towards the ceiling. It looked like she had reached some sort of conclusion.

Suddenly, Xenovia extended her hand out and said to me

“Ise, pull me up.”

I sighed, thinking to myself “Alright” and extended my hand out. —In that instant! Xenovia grabbed onto my hand and forcibly pulled me over!

“H-Hey! Suddenly—.”

I was caught off guard and got dragged into the pool! As I was about to emerge from the water, just when I was about to object against Xenovia, my mouth was suddenly blocked.

——Xenovia was hugging onto me as she kissed me.

I maintained the position that I was in, and didn’t resist—. Xenovia revealed a strange smile as she moved her lips away from mine.

“…Ahahaha, that’s the second kiss. Ise, I’m serious. Whether it’s for the Student Council President, for the battle, and of course for love.”

Xenovia kept hugging onto me in the water. As she was currently completely naked, the sensation of her body was transmitted directly onto mine…the feeling of her oppai were amazing! Hey, what am I doing in the pool this late at night!? No, although I’m very happy, I can’t let the other girls see this! It doesn’t look like we’re having a secret rendezvous!

Xenovia looked at me with moist eyes and said

“The reason I was able to choose this way of life, is all thanks to Rias-zenbuchou, Asia, Irina, as well as other friends and people. But

there are so many things that I want to do, only because I have you by my side, Ise. I was able to have such happiness in my life together with you. And I've gradually been reaching my goal. You're the first, and you should also be the last man to give me such things. —When you become [King], Ise. I'll follow you."

——.

…This girl, unabashedly said something like that which would make people happy.

"Hmm, I'm definitely going to become [King] one day. If you want to follow me then feel free to do so. But, I'm not as skilled as Rias, so it will probably make things hard for you, you know?"

"That's what I want. To start from the beginning and experience each step. That sounds quite interesting."

This is exactly something you'd say, Xenovia! Since you've said that, it would be good if I took Asia, you and Ravel, the four of us together, with me when I become independent.

Xenovia held my face with both her hands. She was probably imitating Sister Griselda whom she admired.

"…Yes. Ise, you've found your own path, to surpass Juggernaut Drive. I need to discover my path…."

After Xenovia muttered to herself for a while, she seemed to have understood something again, and then she began to swim again.

"I'm feeling motivated. I'm going to swim another lap. You go up first, Ise."

H-H-Hey, forcible pulling me into the pool and forcibly kissing me—.

But, seeing her happy, I'll leave it at that. It seems like Xenovia had widened her perspective, and completely let things go like me.

But, Xenovia. About what you said, I'm truly happy. Because you said that you were really happy living together with me.

Say, Vali. There are also people who have felt happiness as a result

of my peace, you know?

After I climbed up from the pool, I shouted to Xenovia

“Hey, the battle is tomorrow! Be more appropriate!”

Xenovia waved to me from the pool in response.

“You two are actually having a secret rendezvous! This is too devious!”

After hearing that, I was suddenly hugged by someone from behind — it was Irina! A feeling like soft marshmallows pressed onto my back! Oppai! And this feeling…they were nude! Irina embraced me and moved around to my front — she had let her hair down, and was only wearing a pair of panties!

Irina puffed out her cheeks and said

“…I saw you and Xenovia doing something.”

“Ah! Uh, t-that was….”

“You’re going to take Xenovia with you?”

She really was eavesdropping on our conversation just then. I scratched my face and thought….

“T-That isn’t certain yet.”

“Then, won’t I be together with you in the future, Ise-kun?”

“Irina, you’re an angel right? Y-You want to, suppose that after hundreds of years you’ll have a respectable position, by which time it might not be convenient to see each other….”

After all, she was Michael-san’s Ace. In the future, Irina was definitely going to become someone of great ability.

Irina moved back slightly, but moved her face closer. She said to me with moist eyes

“In a sense, childhood friends are more important than girlfriends or peerage members….”

“G-Girlfriend…you’re saying even more important than Rias?”

“Although you may not think so Ise-kun, I think that childhood friends are more important than girlfriends. So I’ll do for you whatever Rias does, and I’ll go even further than that.”

She hugged me again, and said such stimulating words! Her wings also began to flicker as she said that! Does doing this count as starting to have thoughts which could make her fall!? Irina’s oppai which were pressed against my chest changed shape, and I was currently in a state of high alert! The sensation of an Angel’s delicate skin was pressed against me — this sensual feeling put me in a trance.

Irina placed her head against my chest and said

“…That, do you want to go over to that room like this? I want to help improve your morale before the battle, Ise-kun….”

…I **gulp** swallowed my saliva. …Irina you! Ever since Christmas, your words have been so provocative aaaaah! I want to! I want to go to that room! I really want to take you there like this!

But while my mind was filled with these thoughts, Xenovia suddenly emerged from the pool and came into my view! Xenovia came up from the side of the pool, and came straight towards us.

“I also want to boost our morale! Irina! Lend that room to me! I reserved Ise earlier than you!”

What do you mean reserved!? You mean that!? D-Doing that thing!?

Irina’s face swelled up again when she heard this!

“Not—possible! That’s something Michael-sama gave to me! It’s my and darling’s love nest! It’s fine to use it for Ise-kun together with Xenovia and Asia, but if it’s only for you by yourself, you’ll probably stay in it for a week and won’t return it to me Xenovia!”

“Of course! Lend me Ise for ten days! I want to discover all the possibilities in there!”

“I said it’s not possible so it’s not possible!”

Irina was tightly holding onto my arm, she didn't plan on letting go! Xenovia, unwilling to yield, hugged onto my other arm! Ahh, both of my arms felt the unparalleled soft sensation of a female's body! Their surging, soft and tender oppai wrapped around both of my hands, I was overcome with unsurpassed happiness!

Both of them had very large oppai, I could really feel their incredible texture, this was truly beyond words!

"Ise-kun belongs to me as my childhood friend! He's my darling, darling!"

"No—He's the person that I reserved! Only I call him darling!"

Both of them hugged onto me as sparks continuously flew between them! Then, when I didn't know what to do, another person hugged me from behind.

"…Ise-san, you need to get some rest~."

…It was a sleepy and confused Asia. H-Hey, you came here half-asleep…? In front of Asia who couldn't possibly be here, I decided that I needed Xenovia and Irina.

I persuaded Xenovia and Irina, and then picked Asia up like a sleeping princess.

"Sleep? I can't leave Asia near the pool."

After I said that, Asia dreamily said to me

"…Wet, not possible without water…Ise-san, splashing me~."

"Alright, let's go back."

"…Splashing me~swimming together~."

Ah, my Asia-chan is so cute. Asia who was sleeping really was adorable. I swear to support the new Buchou! From the beautiful Rias-buchou to the cute Asia-buchou, it really was a great succession!

Xenovia and Irina looked at the sleeping Asia then looked at each other — then laughed "Heehee".

“Well. Since Asia-buchou said so, there’s no other way then.”

“Hmm. Asia-buchou’s orders must be followed.”

The two of them agreed. Being able to quickly reconcile was one of the good things about these two. —But, they clung onto my body again.

“Well, I’m going to sleep in Ise-kun’s room tonight. Be careful not to wake Rias-zenbuchou when you go to sleep though.”

“Yeah! Then we’ll go and sleep with Ise and Asia on the same bed!”

No way! I have to sleep together with Rias, Asia, Xenovia and Irina! B-But, they probably won’t listen even if I say something….

“Fine, on another note, we need to win tomorrow. We can do it.”

Hearing what I said, Xenovia and Irina both made confident smiles.

Fine, although quite a few things happened in the pool, I also have to cheer up.

I had a good feeling about tomorrow’s battle.

…Although that was what I thought, I woke up on the floor next to the bed. Not only Xenovia, but even Irina was rolling around on the bed, thus I was kicked off—.

Notes

1. This is referring to the ‘baby-making room’ introduced in Volume 18 Life.1, which could also be interpreted as ‘erotic room’.

2. Irasshaimase! A phrase often used in shops and restaurant to greet a customer. It has the meaning of “welcome” or “may I help you?”

3. Draw the short straw: To be randomly/unluckily/unfairly selected to do a certain task which is usually unwanted.

4. Ossan: An informal version of “ojisan”. It means “uncle” or “middle-aged man”.

5. Balor is a god from Irish mythology who is associated with drought or decay.

6. –dono: Honorific like “Lord” or “Master” which is more respectful than –sama.

Life.3
Fist and Sword (Carnival)

Part 1

The day of the battle against the Church's rebellion group finally arrived. The members of the Occult Research Club, the Sitri group, Sister Griselda, and Dulio gathered at an underground level of the Hyoudou residence, in the room where a magic circle was prepared for transportation. Azazel-sensei, the personnel from Heaven and Ikuse Tobio who were acting as support members also arrived. Azazel-sensei emerged from the crowd of people and briefed us on the battle.

"Listen up, this time we're going up against the Church's rebellion group. The location was hurriedly built for this battle in the style of a rating game and we'll be going there via magic circle. The other side has accepted this, as this battle will certainly be more intense than the previous one."

The location that will be used for the match. If that's the case, compared to fighting in the small town, it'll be much more dangerous. Sona-zenkaichou said

"It's scheduled to start at midnight. Our opponents will be using the magic circle that we prepared to be transported to the location of the battle."

After hearing this, Saji added

“Whether it was the location of the battle, or us preparing the magic circle for transportation to the location, we really weren’t sure if they would accept it. Being transported into a prison or barrier, or the location of the battle being a trap to begin with, they never considered that.”

Indeed, that was a valid point. This was a condition which was clearly favourable to us, so we really had to thank them for being able to accept such conditions. Azazel-sensei smiled wryly and replied

“Then let me ask you, even if you thought that, what would you have done? I’ve considered the other possibilities, but I never planned to use them. That’s all there is to it. The other side guessed that we wouldn’t use such methods, after all, when we begin fighting, the impact of it won’t be small. If it’s a fight, then we should just accept the reality of it. Both sides already understand that the Church’s rebellion has reached a point of no return.”

This meant that we believed in accepting it. The belief that we wanted to fight against our disgruntled opponents, the belief that we were the reason for their dissatisfaction…but we had to keep in mind that as warriors, we were going to be their opponents in this battle. Perhaps it was also because of Strada and Cristaldi, two people that they trusted, hence the warriors following them also had trust in us. Sensei then continued

“…I’m really sorry, to make you guys draw the short straw. However, Strada and Cristaldi certainly brought with them more than just discontent warriors. Although the fact that the warriors are hoping to vent their anger at us isn’t a lie, the three Cardinals must have another motive. …I’ve received some information from the Vatican’s headquarters. It let me understand…sperathat they were the real idiots.”

Sensei smiled wryly again. It was slightly unexpected, but the look in his eyes was a little sad…. I think sensei discovered the true motive behind that old man and ossan’s challenge to us. Hearing what sensei said, everyone displayed a docile expression as they nodded.

It looked like everyone was determined and had already made up their minds. Sona-zenkaichou darted her eyes over to Shinra-san, encouraging her swiftly to explain the situation behind the scenes. Shinra-san used her own magic to summon a large mirror in mid-air, and then began explaining. The mirror displayed a map of the entire area that would be the stage for this battle.

“The stage for this battle uses the area within a ten kilometre radius of Kuoh Academy as a template. The creation of this stage is all thanks to the assistance of Rossweisse-sensei.”

Rossweisse-san also helped out in creating the stage? I felt rather surprised, and then Rossweisse-san said to everyone

“This battle’s stage uses an application of the sealing technique for Trihexa that I’m still researching. …But I hope that the results are good…”

I see, using the sealing method that she was researching. Rosseweisse-san used her self-developed theory, and she hasn’t stopped researching the specialised seal for Trihexa for years. It seems like Azazel-sensei and the other researchers also assisted… and the results of her research have been used in this battle’s stage. …The unknown opponents, and the beast that no one has ever encountered…. With these things as her goal, I really admired Rossweisse-san who dedicated time every day to think about this sealing technique. This was all because she was a rare, talented woman in magic, thus she was able to do it. Shinra-san then stated

“The opponent will be splitting up their forces into two squadrons. Ewald Cristaldi and Vasco Strada will be acting as the leaders of each squadron.”

That was easy to understand. The stage for the battle was Kuoh town! The opponents were the former wielder of Excalibur and the former wielder of Durandal who would be leading the two squadrons. Following what Shinra-san said, Sona-zenkaichou said

“We will also be divided into two groups. As for the assignment, [Joker] Dulio Gesualdo will be the leader, Sister Griselda, Irina-san, those of the [Brave Saints], as well as the Sitri group except Saji

who are acting as support will be responsible for taking on Ewald Cristaldi's side."

So that means it would be the Angels and the Sitri group against the holy sword wielder Cristaldi-san.

"So that means, it'll be the Gremory household, Saji-kun and the other members who will be responsible for going up against Vasco Strada."

Rias said

"Our opponent is…the former wielder of Durandal, Strada-ossan."

The raging flames of battle had already ignited in Xenovia's eyes.

"Kuroka, Le Fay and Slash Dog will be responsible for that side's support."

—Sensei added. I see, the support members were still quite competent. …Even so, Qlippoth only needed a slight opening, at which they would certainly jump in. This was quite worrisome. Then someone stepped out from the crowd — it was Kiba.

"Sona-zenkaichou, can I go over to [Joker]'s side?"

—! …Hearing this, everyone was quite surprised. But everyone quickly understood the reason behind it. …Kiba's fighting spirit had been ignited again by Excalibur. Sona-zenkaichou closed her eyes and asked

"It's because of Excalibur right?"

Kiba silently nodded.

"I heard that Cristaldi is the former wielder of Excalibur."

Sona-zenkaichou asked Sister Griselda about this.

"Yes, although he's now retired, he is indeed a rare person, naturally able to wield Excalibur. It's said that in his youth, he was able to use three of Excalibur simultaneously."

…Three of Excalibur at the same time. Although that bastard Freed

was able to do similar things, he was probably only using them indiscriminately. After all, after the incident with Kokabiel's attack, Kiba raised his power tremendously and showed no mercy to that ossan. Sister Griselda then said

"He is also the only person that the Pope gave a replica of Excalibur during the production of Ex-Durandal."

"A replica of Excalibur?"

I asked, at which time Rias placed her hand over her forehead.

"I heard that after gathering the seven Excalibur swords, they wanted to create a replica which contained the same power. From what I remember, the replica's actual power was less than a fifth of the original…."

So that ossan's sword was actually a replica of Excalibur! So the feeling that I had back then was actually this.

"His Eminence Strada should also have received a replica of Durandal similarly."

—Sister Griselda said. That old man has a replica! …It looks like this was going to be a fierce battle…. After hearing this, Kiba strongly pleaded.

"…Please let me fight against him. I want to surpass Excalibur again, surpass the wielder of Excalibur. This is not revenge, but a challenge!"

Among the great individuals within the Church, the former wielder of Excalibur had ignited his passion. The expression that exuded from Kiba's eyes was not out of hatred, but a mixed feeling. …I didn't know if it was anger towards himself, or anger towards his opponent, or even—. Rias struggled to find an answer, and thus another person's voice interjected

"—How about simply letting him do so?"

The person who was in agreement with this was Arthur Pendragon. An unexpected person showed up here. …No, the opponent was

directly related to holy swords. Vali had hoped that this guy would be able to fight. So in consideration of that, it wasn't surprising for this guy to show up. All eyes were directed towards the handsome youth who said to Kiba with a faint smile

"A swordsman's dedication can only be matched by another swordsman. Isn't that right, Kiba Yuuto-kun?"

Kiba was silent. Then the eyes of those two met, and I felt as though there was something that only swordsmen could understand. Arthur placed his hand on his chest and said

"I don't really want to replace you, but allow me participate in the fight against Vasco Strada. Being the old man who is known as the strongest wielder of Durandal, I've always been interested in him, in particular, his own strength is regarded as the strongest among the wielders of Durandal."

So Arthur wanted to join the Gremory household's side. With what he said, it was even more unexpected. After listening to what he said — she sighed and then turned to her friend.

"…Sona, let Kiba join your side then."

"Is that alright, Rias?"

After confirmation of that, Rias turned to Kiba and said

"Yuuto, only this time, please settle things with your feelings."

Kiba immediately knelt down, and expressed his gratitude to his master.

"Yes, thank you."

His expression was not only that of gratefulness — it also made me feel the determination of a warrior. …Anyone would think that his current expression looked rather gallant. However, my friend. I've already noticed. After this concluded, everyone discussed the battle with each other, and the remaining time was the last chance to rest before the battle began. Everyone went about with their own ways to relax, while I went over to Kiba who was leaning against a wall.

“Kiba, can I talk to you for a bit?”

“What is it”

“You’re not reverting right?”

I bluntly asked him. He hesitated for a moment, then made a false smile.

“…No, I know that I’m the Knight of Rias Gremory, and the sword of the Occult Research Club.”

What he said came from the heart, but it still annoyed me.

“Hmm, that’s right. You’re the sword. —But do you have a scabbard for that sword?”

“—”

Kiba didn't reply to my question. I…said everything that was on my mind.

"…That is something you definitely need to remember. To take your place in anything, I have to politely decline. Rias Gremory's [Knight] are you and Xenovia. I'm not going to take your place. So…you definitely can't die, idiot."

After hearing what I said, Kiba was surprised, but quickly smiled again. After it felt like he was thinking about what I said again, he revealed a modest smile.

"Really, a replacement…is not possible. You told me so seriously, it feels as though I've been given a shot from a needle."

I think that was able to help reduce his tension a bit. Since it worked, it seems like what I said to him was correct. …Alright, Kiba had no problems now, what remained was…. I looked over at Asia. She was sitting on a chair which was prepared there, facing Heaven as she prayed. I went over to her side and asked

"Asia, mind if I interrupt you for a while?"

Asia opened her eyes, and replied calmly

"…We have to fight against those people from the Church right?"

Yes, Asia needed to confront the people from the Church next. Her feelings were definitely very complex right now.

"Hmm, if it's too hard for you, you don't have to go. …Although you'll come along anyway even if I say that."

That's right, I already understood Asia's response. Hmm, if it's her, then she would definitely—. [Yes, Ise-san, Rias-oneesama, Xenovia and Irina. If everyone is going to fight, I will also go with them.] She would definitely reply with a smile. Asia's absolute defender was not here right now.

"Fafnir hasn't woken up yet so you'll have to rely on the four evil dragons to protect you. Naturally, we will also protect you! But when the situation gets bad, we'll have to let them protect you."

Since Fafnir wasn't here, Asia really needed to rely on the power of those four evil dragons.

"Yes! The evil dragons are also very gentle, so that means I can focus on healing!"

Asia nodded firmly. But, would they intentionally attempt to attack the healer? The previous incidents with the rebellion have not had any casualties. …Since they know that Asia is a healer, we could expect that they won't specifically try to attack her…. However, it was quite likely that they would try to seal her ability. Such a Sacred Gear has never actually been seen, although it wouldn't be surprising if someone in the Church possessed this kind of ability. Ah, in that case we'll have to be careful about such an ability. After all, the Gremory household was one which focused purely on power. Kuroka and Le Fay came up to me as I was thinking.

"Well, if you encounter any strange techniques that you can't understand, we'll sneakily help you cancel it from behind nya."

Saying something like that! Neko-sama was the same as well, she was really good at reading my mind, that nekomata ane![111]

"Please look after my brother."

Le Fay made this request. And that brother was quietly standing there, reading a library book…. Completely indifferent towards his sister's concerns.

"I don't think that there will be any need, but you can leave it to me."

Whilst replying to Le Fay's request — Xenovia and Irina entered my view. Both of them had unsheathed their holy swords, and their swords were interlocked.

"…Although I don't really want to fight against comrades, I'm going to say that this is to surpass the former wielder of the holy swords, Xenovia." "Ah, we need to become worthy wielders to live up to people like Durandal's Roland, or Hauteclere's Oliver."[121]

Both of them appeared to be rather cheerful. After all, they had the honour of being chosen to be the wielders of holy swords. Then

Sister Griselda moved towards Xenovia, and suddenly grabbed her cheeks with both hands! Xenovia and I both thought that she had come to say a few words before the battle. However—.

“Xenovia, your opponent is His Eminence Strada. You understand this 120% right?”

“Uh huh. Of course. I-I will fight with respect. A-Absolutely won’t be disrespectful.”

Born in the same facility, Sister Griselda was like a sister to Xenovia and someone she had to obey. The sudden question seemed to have puzzled her. As the opponents were related to the Church, she felt some disrespect, and Xenovia could only apologise. —Then Griselda-san hugged Xenovia in her arms.

“…I had to say that first. Do understand, Xenovia. —A woman’s power is not her physical strength as a girl. But it is her abilities and skills in the household.”

Hearing this, Xenovia was slightly embarrassed.

“—! T-That is something I already know! There is no misunderstanding that allowing boys see my trained biceps will fascinate myself! After I find the true meaning at the end of this, I’m going to improve my real womanly power!”

…Umm, what are you talking about just before the battle! Uh, although it really suits your style!

“This is something I already knew last year! You’re rather slow to realise this, Xenovia!”

Irina proudly said! Weren’t you also slow to find about this!? Hearing the exchange between them, Griselda-san smiled as she said

“…But, Xenovia. You’ve become much like a girl, which makes me very pleased. It used to be for God, for your faith that you constantly wielded Durandal and your eyes never saw anything outside of battle. …Although you could say that you didn’t have a choice since your birth…. But the current Xenovia is far more amazing to me.”

Sister Griselda tightly hugged Xenovia and said

“You’re the source of my troubles, the person that makes me worry…and also my cute sister. If it’s you, you should be able to become the Student Council President, and also surpass His Eminence Strada.”

Xenovia who looked embarrassed as she was being hugged replied

“…I’ll work hard to become the sister that you’ll be proud of.”

This scene was touchingly warm. Although their positions had changed, their feelings never changed.

“Ise-sama”

Ravel said to me. This time she was staying back to do the housekeeping. The day of Riser’s rating game was approaching, so I shouldn’t force her. I smiled softly.

“Hmm, I understand. I’ll come back as soon as the winner is decided.”

“Of course. Ise-sama is a very busy person.”

Really, my manager is very strict! —Sona-zenkaichou stood up from the chair that she was sitting on.

“The time has arrived. —Let’s go the battlefield.”

Everyone gathered in the centre of the magic circle for transportation. From there, our battle against the Church’s rebellion group began!

Part 2

A few minutes had passed since we arrived at the battlefield via transportation from the magic circle — I — Kiba Yuuto, in order to participate in the battle against Ewald Cristaldi, joined the side of the

[Brave Saints] and Sitri household. This side's battlefield — was the area around the ruins of a church. That's right, this was the place that the Fallen Angels like Raynare had used as their base. This was a place that Irina's father once belonged to, and also a place which held a lot of fate for us. On the [Brave Saints] side there was Dulio Gesualdo-san, Sister Griselda-san, and Irina who acted as the leaders, with a total of around ten people on that side. Of the [Brave Saints] which were under the Four Great Seraphs, three groups of them had gathered here. The remaining [Brave Saints] were responsible for guarding Heaven. It hasn't been a long time since the attack last year. It was understandable for Heaven's side to keep some of the reincarnated angels there. With the battle looming ahead, and about to start at any time, Joker Dulio spoke to me while I was waiting on standby. He sat down beside me and said

"Ah, I didn't expect that I'd be able to be together with Kiba-kun on the frontlines."

"In that case, I feel honoured to be able to be here."

I've already fought this guy several times in mock training battles. … He was the type of person who simply exemplified the concept of the ultimate [Trump Card]. Dulio scratched the back of his head and said

"I've already heard about the complicated situation surrounding Kiba-kun's origin, I thought that Kiba-kun wouldn't want to cooperate with me."

"My hatred towards things is clearly distinguished, and I currently have nothing against you who is my captain."

…After speaking with this man several times, I knew that the man named Dulio Gesualdo was actually more [soft] than expected, he was a youth consistent with his age. To be honest, he was a nice person, a man who was very suited to be smiling.

"Yeah, because I heard about Kiba-kun's past. I'm a little concerned about whether Kiba-kun will be bloodthirsty today. Even if you hold a grudge, this is an internal conflict between your own comrades. Only the kids who can endure right now are the best."

At the same time that he said this, Dulio took out an unknown object from his chest. —It was an origami paper crane.

“In the underground of the Church’s facilities around Kuoh town, a ceremony regarding the dispelling of a Sacred Gear will soon be held.”

Since the alliance, several places around town were opened up to Heaven’s side — those were the facilities for the Church’s people who were dispatched to stay at, and it was said that one of them in particular was a facility related to Sacred Gears. Dulio played with the paper crane then continued

“There is a child whose legs are disabled. Most of the time, that child is on a wheelchair. In fact, that child actually has a Sacred Gear related to the legs, but because his resistance is too weak, it’s causing his power to develop in a bad way. That is to say, the Sacred Gear which could allow his legs to run faster is actually binding its user’s legs. Sacred Gears, although highly convenient, they’re also very frightening.”

He smiled wryly, and his eyes were filled with sadness.

“Thanks to the success of the Grigori’s analysis and technical work, for the children with Sacred Gears, the dispelling procedure has already been able to enter the phase of a trial run. Although in theory, they’ve already reached perfection, still, that child chose to undergo the dispelling procedure.”

“What will happen after the dispelling?”

“The hindrance from the Sacred Gear may weaken, and he may be able to live a normal life. Well, it relies on the technology of the former Governor, so it’ll definitely be successful. That’s what I believe.”

Dulio smiled happily, this was proof that he truly trusted Azazel-sensei’s technology. …Although he was originally more hostile, Azazel-sensei requested the alliance in good faith, so while some people were sceptical, there was a little bit of trust. Dulio stood up, held the paper crane as if would hold a paper plane, and then said

“Amusement park—. That child said that if he could walk, he would go to an amusement park. Using his own two feet, he would play at every amusement park over and over. Everything that I want is probably impossible. But…that’s very normal. Even with the Sacred Gear, he is still an ordinary child. So, he wants to go to an amusement park just like most others.”

He let go of the paper crane. Then, the paper crane flew into the sky as it rode on a passing gust of wind. After the paper crane looped around in the air, the wind died down and it returned to Dulio’s hand.

“I think that simply being able to protect the dreams of those children is already enough.”

He turned around, and left me with these words

“Well, what comes next is the time for battle. It’s time for a reunion with that scary teacher. But first, we should greet him.”

As if in response to what he just said, the figures of a group of warriors appeared before us—.

In the midst of the warriors who were lined up in front of us, there were more warriors wearing a priest’s outfit, but it was also possible to see the figures of female warriors who were dressed like Xenovia and Irina. Occasionally, I could see the figure of young, white-haired priests like Freed. Although they didn’t seem to have the same bloodthirsty atmosphere as Freed, I could still feel that they were full of hostility. …Based on a visual assessment of the opponent, the number of warriors which had come for the battle was near one hundred. I’m afraid that the number of people who came to battle against the Gremory household’s side would also be the same. In the middle of the warriors was — the man who had the replica of Excalibur and wore modern vestments from a few days ago, Ewald Cristaldi. …Not only was he the teacher of the warriors, he once also taught Xenovia and Irina swordsmanship who are his disciples. He held the replica of Excalibur in his hand as it released a holy aura. The one who went forward first was — Dulio. He raised his hand as a greeting towards Ewald Cristaldi who didn’t care.

“This is sensei. Long time no see.”

Without changing the serious expression on his face, Ewald Cristaldi said in a low voice

“…This reunion, should it be happy, or should it be sad. Dulio, and also the reincarnated angels, if you still recognise me as a mentor, then can you accept the punishment of my sword without any further ado?”

Irina and the other [Brave Saints] who were here were people who had all revered Ewald Cristaldi as their teacher. She had a complicated expression on her face as she faced her teacher.

“There are a lot of things that this side wants to ask. After all, it would be even better if we could discuss things.”

Dulio replied calmly. He was constantly complaining of the internal strife, and first began a conversation with his former teacher. If it was possible to drop the weapons which were already held just by a conversation, that would be even better…. However, Ewald Cristaldi saw through his disciple, then said

“…This place that you often visited will soon hold a ceremony to dispel a Sacred Gear, right?”

“Yes, it’s as you say.”

This is something that I heard he found out about today. It looks like the rebellion group received this information in advance. Ewald Cristaldi sighed as he said

“However, that facility has become occupied by [Devils’ rituals]. This is already sinful. I need to carry out the judgement on those people whose minds and bodies have already been dyed black…. There are people within my subordinates who also hold such views, and I am a true believer. In this position, I cannot deny what these words.”

Hearing what Cristaldi said, Dulio narrowed his eyes.

“You mean that to say that you want to destroy that facility? Well, what do you plan to do about the children who are living there?”

“In purgatory, they will be purified of their sins. —If I say that, what

will you do?”

Hearing a single sentence from such an aggressive person, the expression on Joker’s face which was always a smile — suddenly changed.

“…Even if it’s a joke, don’t say such things in front of me, sensei.”

Dulio’s voice was filled with anger. That’s right, the man who was formerly known as his teacher clearly knew the words which would aggravate the youth who was normally so laid back. Dulio also knew that the opponent was trying to provoke him, but he still couldn’t ignore the frivolous statement. Ewald Cristaldi shook his head, and said as if he was lamenting

“Dulio, why? A good warrior like you, someone who even reached the position of Joker, yet why haven’t you realised? Even if there is an alliance, there is still a need for the eradication of evil! Or has even your heart been replaced after Michael-sama reincarnated you as an Angel? Your power — is the power of Zenith Tempest, and you can even the destroy the balance of the world, right?”

Known as one of the unparalleled powers which could even destroy God, Dulio Gesualdo possessed the second most powerful ability among them. Just as Ewald Cristaldi just said, as long as Dulio-san had such intentions, it would be possible for him to be like Cao Cao and have the entire world as his enemy. —However, Dulio-san shook his head in disagreement.

“…Sensei, I never once thought about the world like that. No matter what happens, I only go about doing one thing.”

He—opened his arms as if he was embracing someone.

“—Doing what is within my power to protect the smiles on the faces of those children. I became strong for this, became Joker for this. This belief has never changed.”

These words made the man who was formerly his mentor and the warriors on standby around him to hold complicated expressions on their faces. It seems that from the things that Joker just mentioned, they felt a part of themselves which resonated with the same

feelings deep down. Sister Griselda-san then said

“…Your Eminence Cristaldi, continuing this conversation is meaningless. …Even if this continued, there are no words to be said which can shake the heart of this child.”

Hearing the Sister’s opinion, Ewald Cristaldi looked up at the sky as he said

“Truly a stupid man. …Haven’t changed a bit.”

“Yes, I think that if it was only me, a stupid Angel, there probably wouldn’t be any punishment.”

“Well then, I will follow my beliefs too. Even though the God we respect is the same, if the [Justice] we believe in is different, then it will have to be corrected.”

Ewald Cristaldi pointed the blade of the Excalibur replica at us, and then loudly shouted!

“Continuing to talk is pointless, it…really is like that. If you’re also warriors, then use your weapons to make me yield! Warriors, this is a battle that Heaven will allow. Today, we will let all of our beliefs out here!” “Ou————————————————————————————-!” [131]

The warriors let out a loud roar which was enough to make the air tremble.

“Have no regrets in death! For the wages of sin — is death!”

Ewald Cristaldi raised his sword up high — then swung it down with force. “Ou

——

!”

That was the signal for the start of the battle, the warriors roared loudly as they charged towards us! The interior of the church instantly became a battlefield. At the same time, equipment using communication magic automatically broadcasted Sona-zenkaichou’s voice in our ears. The former President and her [Bishop] Kusaka-san were located together in the rear guard.

“Well, everyone. It’s begun. First, Tsubaki and Tsubasa, advance to form a shield!”

““Yes!””

Bearing the brunt of the attack was Shinra-senpai and the Rook Yura-san. Shinra-senpai called forth her counter-style Sacred Gear [Mirror Alice]. Yura-san who was beside her initiated her artificial Sacred Gear [Twinkle Aegis]. The former was able to return double the power of an opponent’s attack which destroyed the mirror. The latter had a pact with a fairy which allowed it to use various offensive and defensive abilities in accordance to the attribute of the fairy. The warriors lined up at the rear unleashed projectile attacks. Using guns of light or long-ranged Sacred Gears, they fired off their attacks together. Shinra-senpai had manifested a countless number of mirrors in the air, and supporting her, Yura-san’s shield used the power of the fairy to create a large barrier of light. Shinra-senpai’s mirrors doubled the strength of the attacks and reflected them back to the opponent’s side, whilst Yura-san’s shield enveloped the long-ranged attacks from the warriors in flames and destroyed them. The first wave of attacks from the warriors was completely blocked by the defence of the Sitri’s [Queen] and [Rook]. In order to prevent the opponent from aiming directly at them, the [Bishop] Hanakai-san used her artificial Sacred Gear to produce a protective barrier which enclosed Shinra-senpai and Yura-san. The next to arrive were the close-ranged combat warriors. They wielded swords, guns, axes and other weapons as they charged towards us in a group formation. Sona-zenkaichou issued the following instructions

“Well, our side will use close-ranged members to engage them.”

The four people to advance were the Sitri’s [Pawn] Nimura-san, [Knight] Meguri-san, [Knight] Bennia-san, as well as the [Rook] Rugal-san. In addition, I and several reincarnated Angels of the [Brave Saints] joined them. Everyone was holding a weapon (Nimura-san wore greaves, and Rugal-san was barehanded), as a vanguard type of warrior. Standing in front of Shinra-senpai and Yura-san, we of the vanguard clashed with each other! From their body movements and their use of weapons, it could be understood that these warriors had definitely experienced numerous battles.

That is to say that not a single person was a new recruit. They had also fought against devils and vampires. Their experience was being displayed without reservation. Anyway, they all used swords of light, the tips of their guns had been prepared with vials of holy water and they even had crosses to greet us with! If hit, a serious injury would be inevitable. Even if it wasn't a fatal injury, the physical and psychological damage would be immense. However, we have also survived several near-death situations. Any half-baked attacks won't strike us. I used the characteristic of the [Knight], speed, to evade all of the attacks from the warriors. I then used a holy demonic sword that I crafted to shatter the opponent's swords, and knocked them out in a single breath. …But it was not possible to kill them. Although it was the other side which started this battle, their rebellion did not result in any deaths. Of course, the other side also knew that they were in a position where they could be cut down without any complaints, the guns and swords which they held in their hands were real. …Even so, simply killing them recklessly could provoke the resentment of revenge. …But when the necessary time comes, I have the courage and awareness to kill them, even if hated, there would be no other way. However, there is no need to kill the opponents if their problems can be resolved without death. Because the only opponent which needs to be defeated — there is only one person here. It was Ewald Cristaldi who had remained motionless so far. With the Excalibur replica stabbed into the ground, he was observing the battlefield.

"Ah, so troublesome."

Bennia-san complained. As a Grim Reaper, she felt unsatisfied by the fact that she could use her scythe to hit her opponents without much effort. Her scythe was capable of harvesting souls. Just by cutting them, their souls could be harvested, and it would most likely result in death. If such a situation occurred once or twice, it couldn't be helped, but she specifically chose not to use her scythe. Currently, she was using the part without a blade to attack. Although her personality was usually unpredictable, she listened to our intentions of not having any fatalities.

"…But, this would be a test of that."

The [Rook] Rugal-san was boldly brandishing his arms which were covered in fire magic to knock down numerous warriors. He was a Werewolf, but at the same time, he also possessed offensive magic that he used against the warriors. As long as he wanted to, he could tear apart most of the warriors here as if they were paper. But he was controlling his strength here.

“Although it’s difficult, we have to go along with this.”

“…It’ll be good to do a bit of practice adjusting the destructive power of my sword.”

The [Pawn] Nimura-san and [Knight] Meguri-san were repelling the warriors as they were adjusting the power of their artificial Sacred Gears. That’s right, in here — it could be said that we were putting limits on ourselves when fighting. To our opponents, this was known as [Going easy]. Cristaldi seemed to be aware of this, so he simply observed the battlefield. …Although this is only my personal conjecture, perhaps…they, no, since the beginning, Cristaldi…. Just as I was contemplating the ideas of the warriors’ mentor, Shinra-senpai cried out loudly

“Kaichou! The conditions have all been satisfied!”

In response to Shinra-senpai’s cry, Kaichou replied

“Good, Tsubaki. —Accomplished. Everyone, fall back!”

Accomplished? Could it be that — we complied with Kaichou’s order, and Shinra-senpai maintained her distance!

“—Balance Break!”

Shinra-senpai yelled out sonorously, and at the same time numerous mirrors of all sorts of shapes, sizes and colours appeared. “Come out, [Mad Hatter], [Dormouse], [March Hare]!” [141]

Out from a mirror came a demon wearing a hat, an enormous mouse, as well as a hare which wore a tailored coat and walked on two legs! The creatures emerged from a strange mirror! Through the communications device, we heard Kaichou say

“That is Tsubaki’s Balance Breaker, [Nostalgia Mad Tea Party]. There is a condition for the activation of her Balance Breaker. The condition is to use [Mirror Alice] to perform a certain number of counterattacks.”

That is to say, including the massive attack just then, it has also reflected the opponent’s attacks several times in this battle.

“The three creatures which were generated by the mirror are each able to use specific abilities.”

The large mouse ran towards the warriors, and expelled a gaseous substance from its mouth. Then the warriors’ legs became weak, and they fell to the ground one after the other.

“[Dormouse] will forcibly put to sleep all of the opponents in a fixed area.”

A compulsory slumber! That’s incredible! The warriors had all fallen asleep on the spot!

“Hwaaaa……!”

“Uoooo……!”

At that time, some of the warriors burst out in mad laughter and savage growls, they suddenly began to riot! The rabbit in a tailored coat jumped horizontally and vertically all over the battlefield, and it created ripples on the surface of the ground every time it jumped. It could be deduced that the warriors became abnormal after being influenced by these ripples. It looks like that was the reason. Sona-zenkaichou explained

“[March Hare] causes the people within a fixed area to become violent.”

Next was the slender demon which wore a hat on its head. In the instant that demon caught the attention of the warriors, its eyes emitted a dazzling light. The warriors which were seen by the hat-wearing demon instantly appeared to have entered a trance.

“Uwaaaaaaaaaaaaaa!”

“Iyaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa……!”

All of a sudden, the warriors became frightened of something unknown. They wielded their weapons towards something invisible which was in front of them. The weapons in their hands were only slicing the air.

“The last is [Mad Hatter]—. It is capable of causing the people in an area to hallucinate.”

The former President said. A forced slumber and a stimulant, followed by hallucinations—.

“After being affected by these three abilities, anyone would be unable to continue fighting. This isn’t a direct attack. However, it is possible to weaken the enemies’ forces without using physical force.”

Listening to what zenkaichou said, it felt as though she was talking directly to me. It wasn’t satirical, but rather, it was showing us a different kind of fighting style to ours.

“But, to actually be able to summon three demons which can use three different abilities, it’s basically the same as having a Sacred Gear with more than two abilities…”

Zenkaichou disagreed with my opinion.

“That is not the case, I think that it’s fair. Tsubaki’s subspecies has only one ability: [Summoning demons with abilities from mirrors]. It’s the same as how Kiba-kun’s demonic swords can have various types of attributes; Tsubaki has the ability to summon demons from her mirror.”

…So it’s a similar type of Balance Breaker to my Sword Birth…. Demons possessing different abilities can emerge from the mirror. Besides those three, there would definitely be others. After all, the names of the demons were references to Lewis Caroll’s [Alice in Wonderland]. That was the ability of the Balance Breaker that Shinra-senpai chose—. To be called a subspecies Balance Breaker of the Sacred Gear [Mirror Alice], it had an ability that truly lived up to its name! Shinra-senpai’s family — [Shinra] was originally a family

associated with magic. It was similar to Akeno-san's [Himejima] family, in Japan it could be said that it was ranked as the fifth most powerful family. However, Shinra-senpai has been troubled since her birth by a strange curse which caused her to summon things out of mirrors which did not exist in this world. They finally turned to the Devils — I heard that if they didn't get the help of the Sitri family, it would even affect their lives. Probably because of their relationship with Devils, senpai's parents were exiled from the main Shinra clan…. …To be honest, it's quite horrifying. This power, it belongs to the [Trap] category. In other words, it was especially bad against us of the Gremory household. Calling it the worst wouldn't be an overstatement. Not only Shinra-senpai, Saji-kun and the other members of the Sitri household were mostly technique types, or wizard types. Besides that, Saji-kun and Rugal-san could be considered power type members. Azazel-sensei also commented that in terms of the balance of the household, the Sitri's were clearly a grade above us. That's the truth. We had reflected on this point, and learned techniques, but if we had to go against the purely technique type Sitri household as opponents, it would really be… thinking about future rating games evoked a sense of dread. …Well, when this battle is over, I need to have a good training session with Ise-kun and Xenovia for technique types. At the least, we should remember how to deal with a technique type opponent, otherwise the future would be worrying. As we continued to knock the warriors down, it came to the point where Shinra-senpai's Balance Breaker was the decisive factor of this battle. The man who was watching from the sidelines finally grabbed the sword which was stabbed into the ground.

"—Withdraw."

His deep voice instantly brought silence back to the battlefield. The warriors noticed their sensei's actions, and neatly opened up a path. It could be seen from their actions that they didn't want to give their mentor any unnecessary or troublesome thoughts in his advance, and that they had absolute trust in his strength…. He held the Excalibur replica, and advanced to take us on alone. There was clearly only one person…but it made us feel an immense pressure as though there was an entire group of warriors advancing towards

us. We couldn't stop cold sweat from dripping down our faces. Dulio-san put on a false smile as he said

"…Kiba-kun, I think you already know, Cristaldi-sensei used to be the wielder of Excalibur. Now, that is a replica of Excalibur. It currently has the seven abilities of the original. …It would be best to think that its true power is greater than four of the strongest holy swords combined."

In other words, we should think of the opponent as a monster which far exceeds any expectations — as such is the case. Sona-zenkaichou said via the communications device

"The members of the [Brave Saints] and my household will remain as the opponents of the warriors. Cristaldi's opponents — will be led by Dulio Gesualdo-san who has been on standby until now, as well as Irina-san and Griselda-san. Kiba-kun will also be going."

"""""Understood!"""""

The four people who would be the opponents of Cristaldi, Dulio-san, Griselda-san, Irina-san, and I answered at the same time. The reincarnated Angels opened their symbolic pure white wings while I created several holy demonic swords all around me, of which I then took one of them and got into position facing the target in front of us. As Cristaldi was slowly walking towards us — he suddenly split into numerous avatars. …Were these the avatars created by using Rapidly's high speed movement? Or were they conjured by using Nightmare's ability? Although I hesitated on my judgement because he had produced several avatars without the slightest preparatory movements, there was someone who moved ahead first — it was Griselda-san. She gathered particles of light together at her palm to produce many balls of light.

"Cristaldi-sensei! I'm firing!"

After saying that, Griselda-san fired an innumerable number of balls of light forwards! Each ball contained a dense amount of light that could even be felt, and even if someone wasn't a Devil, being hit would result in immense damage. The spheres of light pierced through the avatars! The pierced avatars were destroyed, returning

to nothingness. They weren't avatars created by using high speed? In that case, that means they were illusions created by Nightmare! Just when I was thinking of this, one of the avatars used its sword to deflect the balls of light, and came rushing towards this side! That is the real thing! Irina-san and I raised our swords, and prepared to engage him — Dulio shouted!

"It's Mimic!"

—! I reacted as soon as I heard the warning, and jumped to the side. This was because I realised that if we continued to stay there, it would be dangerous! Irina-san faced his charge, and slashed through what was thought to be an avatar of Mimic in one blow. The avatar's shape collapsed, turning into a string. I followed it with my eyes. In the middle of the illusion that was shattered by Hauteclere just then — Cristaldi's figure could clearly be seen. The string in Cristaldi's hand completely rebuilt itself, returning to the shape of a sword, and then he darted towards Irina-san! Something like this actually existed, within all the countless avatars, there were illusions created by Nightmare, and at the same time it was combined with Mimic. On top of that, the real person used Transparency and Nightmare to conceal himself within the avatars. In only a brief exchange, the three abilities of Excalibur Mimic, Nightmare, and Transparency had all been demonstrated. This all happened in the course of a natural battle. Irina-san probably realised that it was Mimic, so she foresaw the next move and used her sword to block Cristaldi's attack which appeared out of the illusion! A beautiful defence — the moment I thought that, I saw Irina-san receive a fierce blow from Destruction! The opponent also added on the ability of Destruction in that strike just then! Irina-san endured the blow completely, and half-knelt down on the spot! A vast crater formed on the surface of the ground! The power of Destruction was clearly demonstrated! Even so, Irina-san had used Hauteclere to block a hit from the Excalibur replica, and she made a fearless smile towards her mentor. But the side of her mouth — had blood trickling down it.

"…Sensei, in terms of destructive power, I think Xenovia's a notch better."

In response to his disciple's defiant statement, the man who was her

mentor simply revealed an eloquent smile.

“Well, I know that. —But, don’t just measure Excalibur by its destructive power.”

Cristaldi took out several crosses from the clothing around his chest, and threw them up into the air. The moment after Cristaldi recited a chant, the crosses in the air dispersed, and planted themselves into the ground to surround us! Then a barrier was formed by the crosses which surrounded Cristaldi and us (Me, Irina-san, Griselda-san, Dulio-san)! Noticing this, the Sitri household attempted to move closer — but a huge wave of holy energy was generated from the crosses, and they were unable to contact us or move closer. Cristaldi said

“It uses Blessing’s power to enhance the barrier of the crosses. The Sitri household’s Devils over there will be unable to get closer for around ten minutes.”

…He’s also able to use Blessing. And this barrier’s strength is quite substantial…. Even for me here, it would be impossible to escape unless I used Gram. Cristaldi smiled eloquently.

“Even for Angels, it isn’t easy to break through this barrier which has been strengthened by Excalibur. Use fast movements to evade. Flying into the air to increase your distance will not be possible.”

…Although I have speed, the flying capabilities of the reincarnated Angels have been restricted. Moreover, the barrier prevents the Sitri group from providing assistance…. Irina-san recovered from the damage, and powerfully pushed her mentor’s sword back. As Cristaldi jumped backwards, he released several waves of holy energy towards us at the same time![***] I could use this type of attack, and so could Xenovia and Irina-san! Irina-san and I each swung our swords to release waves! We intended to cancel out our opponent’s waves, but—the attack which was coming towards us evaporated like fog! Even the waves were an illusion! No, the waves also cancelled each other out. The real waves were mixed in with the illusory waves! The illusory waves of holy energy even had the same feeling as the real thing thus it was really difficult to make a quick judgement. An assault from Rapidly which is a direct attack

would be better. Coming to this conclusion, we evaded and allowed several waves to go past—! But the waves of holy energy behind us changed direction, and came towards us again! Cristaldi said

“—Although I didn’t have this back in my day, I occasionally do use the abilities of Ruler.”

—Ruler’s ability! He’s able to freely control the waves of holy energy he released in mid-air! There was nothing more troublesome than having to deal with homing-type waves of holy energy!

“—So be it!”

Dulio-san generated light from his palm. In the next instant, the waves which were closely following us were dissipated by the lightning strike which was released from his palm. …It was an elemental attack from his Sacred Gear. We supported Dulio-san, temporarily increasing our distance to regroup. But because we were inside the barrier, there wasn’t much space to move around freely. …He’s actually able to use Excalibur’s replica to such an extent. Within a single attack directed towards us, it combined at least two abilities. Xenovia was also learning this style of combat though… But because the opponent utilised these sorts of attacks in a completely natural way, it always caught us by surprise. When Xenovia uses the abilities, because her mentality of [Only use the ability next!] is reflected in her actions, defending against it in a mock battle is really easy for me. But this man is different. It’s as if he’s accustomed to using abilities, so he naturally implements them in his attacks. This was the power of Excalibur, and he reached this level after becoming so familiar with it. Honestly speaking, I’ve been starting to suspect that the man in front of us isn’t real, and that he was actually created by using Nightmare or Mimic. …No, perhaps letting us have these thoughts was actually this man’s tactic. Cristaldi took out a small vial of holy water, and poured it over the blade of the replica.

“Even if this is a replica, as long as I’m wielding Excalibur, this kind of situation is a piece of cake.”

When he finished speaking, Cristaldi suddenly disappeared from our sight without the slightest hint of moving. Is it high speed movement?

Or is it Transparency, or is it Nightmare? Damn it! After initially witnessing the abilities combined together, this sword Excalibur has turned into such a difficult thing! As we attempted to track his presence, we were also vigilant of our surroundings! Then, several of Cristaldi's avatars appeared from the side! This kind of situation happened again! It's Nightmare or Mimic! Irina-san and I both raised our swords at the same time in response! Both Irina-san's and my defence — actually succeeded at the same time! Are both of them the real thing?! That's impossible! Irina-san and I began clashing and exchanging blows with our opponent's sword at high speed, and we then steadied our aim to land a blow on him. —In the end, the avatars vanished! So it actually wasn't the real thing, and it wasn't Mimic either?! There were already a countless number of avatars here, on top of which, they once again formed the appearance of Cristaldi.

"—Avatars which are tangible?! Were they really made using the ability of Excalibur Nightmare?!"

I yelled out in surprise. It was incredibly hard to believe! Even avatars with substance could be created?!

"—It's a combination of Rapidly and Nightmare. High speed and illusions are used, which results in avatars that are physically tangible."

That voice travelled here from behind! Unbeknownst to me, a third Cristaldi had moved behind me! I deactivated my holy demonic sword, and changed my Sacred Gear to Blade Blacksmith, and created an army of Dragon Knights which arose from the ground! Using the armoured knights as shields, Irina-san and I jumped backwards to retreat! Cristaldi successively cut down the Dragon Knights almost instantly, and drew closer to us.

"Metaphorically speaking, even someone known as a strong Devil like you, can't quite defend against the effects of holy water…"

Right in front of me — he threw a vial of holy water. Cristaldi destroyed the vial with a single horizontal slash! Holy water spilled out of the shattered vial — and onto my entire body! Cristaldi chanted a prayer after confirming that it was on me. —! In the next

instant, there was an indescribable pain, agony — swept across my entire body! The sanctified power of the holy water was ferociously burning parts of me as a Devil! That seemed to be the body, though even my mind was burning up and with the pain pulsing throughout my entire body, I couldn't speak at all! Did he amplify the effects of ordinary holy water several fold?! No, you could say that it might even have been intensified by a factor of ten!

"The effects were elevated to this level using the ability of Blessing. Would you like to listen to me narrate the Bible with the power of Blessing?"

"Sensei!"

Irina-san unleashed a slash with Hauteclere to his neck in order to save me! That attack — sent her mentor's head flying! Seeing a body without its head, Irina-san was absolutely horrified! She totally did not expect that her own attack would hit her mentor.

"—Too naïve, Shidou Irina."

The voice came from behind Irina-san. The headless body of Irina-san's sensei in front of her vanished. Irina-san turned around when she heard the voice — an avatar of Cristaldi was already there and he had raised his sword, preparing to swing it down! He deliberately let his own student see an illusion of his death to cause her to panic! Irina once again used Hauteclere to block Excalibur's blade — but the power of Destruction pressed down again! The pressure of a second hit from Destruction fully knocked her down onto the ground.

"Don't forget that I'm also here!"

At the same time, Dulio-san hurled fireballs and spears of ice. — However, just when they were about to hit Critaldi, their trajectory changed, and they twisted to the side! The fireballs and spears of ice struck an empty patch of ground to the side. Dulio-san didn't seem to care that his attacks were evaded, and generated a vast number of sharp icicles which protruded up from the ground everywhere! I thought that it would at least hit once — but rather strangely, there were no icicles only in the area around where Cristaldi was.

“—Did he take control of Joker’s attack?!”

Sister Griselda expressed her dismay upon seeing what had happened. Cristaldi said as if it were only natural

“As long as I have the power of Ruler, even Sacred Gears—”

Before the man could finish speaking, he noticed that a part of his clothing had been frozen.

“…can be controlled. I want to say that, but I’m already exhausted after defending against that attack. Being a reincarnated Angel has saved you, Dulio.”

…Even if Dulio-san didn’t use his full power, and I didn’t use Gram, the opponent we were fighting against was just a human!

“…You’re actually this strong, natural born wielder of Excalibur…!”

Witnessing such incredible power, I was at a loss for words, and Dulio-san smiled wryly as he said from the side.

“Hahaha, so that’s why you can’t say it? The other person who is also known as one of the two monsters of the Church. Whether or not it’s a replica, as long as it’s Excalibur, sensei is able to use his limbs in the same way.”

“So he isn’t the user of a Sacred Gear right…?”

I asked to be certain. Although the warriors’ mentor was using the abilities of Excalibur, he didn’t use any special abilities of his own unlike those that Dulio-san and I possessed.

“Neither His Eminence Cristaldi or His Eminence Strada possess a Sacred Gear, people have always commented on Cristaldi’s skill, and Strada’s power.”

“…If they’re the famous warriors of the Church, as a child I heard that even the highest class of Devils could sometimes be exorcised…I truly understand how powerful they are now after seeing it with my own eyes.”

Sona-zenkaichou’s voice was heard through the communications

device. I have also come to understand this. The warriors of the Church whose true power rivalled that of the highest class of Devils —. Before I was sceptical, and even thought it was superstition, but after seeing the real people with my own eyes, I understood that it was the truth. …And the sword that he had was a replica. If it was the real thing, what would've happened…? A human who has honed his skills to the utmost level, was actually strong to such an extent… …I don't need such thoughts. I shakily stood up. I prepared to open the other dimension, and announced to everyone

"…I'm ready to release Gram. Even against a user of Excalibur, the time that Joker has made for an opening is hard to come by."

I walked towards that man with the aura of Gram raised to the maximum for a single strike, and even if it didn't hit, it would be able to create an opening. Then, if Dulio-san attacked — there would a chance of victory! It should be said that this would create an opportunity for victory. However, after Dulio-san heard this, he shook his head.

"…That will not do."

His expression right now — was filled with sorrow.

"You intend to use up your own lifespan right? That will not do. Listen up, Kiba-kun. This battle, is similar to a physical exchange between members of a family. You only need your fists to vent your frustration against each other. There is no need for you to cut down your own lifespan."

……. Joker spoke nicely to me to such an extent that it caused my emotions to flare up.

"But! The opponent is serious! If this continues, won't the injuries that we've accumulated have been in vain?! Do you plan to keep harbouring the discontent of your own people?!"

I burst out with dissatisfaction. This wasn't at all like the usual me. Of course. Excalibur—. My life has been troubled by it. Not just me, many of my comrades were taken by it. …Is this all over? Since Valper Galilei's death and the Three Faction's peace, it could

tentatively be considered the end. …As a friend, Ise-kun saw right through it and told me. But! …But, the natural born user of Excalibur was before my eyes, and although he only had a replica, it was still a real holy sword. Furthermore, he was standing before me as an enemy! Doesn't that make people want to gain victory over him! Doesn't it make people want to surpass him! I, and the others, everything that happened in that facility wasn't an illusion! It wasn't useless! Doesn't that make people want to prove…! Dulio-san placed his hand on my shoulder, and said with a slight smile

"—You're wrong, I will defeat sensei, [You big idiot!]. However, the opponent which is worth giving your life to use that demonic sword is Qlippoth."

Dulio-san was hugging me tightly.

"That, Kiba-kun. —No, Yuuto. You came from one of the Church's facilities right? Well, that's the same as being my younger brother. As the older brother, I cannot allow my younger brother to be reckless. Leave it to this older brother. This captain ain't for nothing."

Dulio-san — stepped forward. He stood in front of his sensei Cristaldi. Cristaldi asked

"—Dulio, known as the strongest man in the Church, in the end, what do you fight for?"

Dulio-san revealed a surprising smile

"—In order to let everyone live a peaceful life. That's not the only definite reason though."

He opened his ten wings, which were as white as snow — his body was wrapped in a golden aura, and the man known as the [Trump Card] was gradually concentrating the power of light into his palms. He made a ring in both his hands, and blew through the middle. What came out of the middle were —bubbles which glowed with the colours of the rainbow. The bubbles spread limitlessly within the barrier, then finally passed beyond the barrier, and surrounded the entire area. In such a fantasy-like scene, everyone in the area stopped what they were doing, and searched for the source of the

bubbles which glowed with the colours of the rainbow. Dulio-san said

“This is a technique utilising [Zenith Tempest] — [Speranza Bolla di Sapone][151]”

In Italian, Speranza Bolla di Sapone had the meaning of [Bubbles of Hope]. Bubbles — had inadvertently fallen onto my hand, and burst in a dreamlike manner. Then, my mind recalled — memories which made me feel nostalgic. That is — singing hymns together with my comrades in that facility.

“Say, if we leave this facility, what does everyone want to do?”

“I want to be an artist. I want to draw a picture of Jesus that people will praise.”

We discussed our dreams every day. We embraced the hopes of life outside —

“I want to become a Sister. But, opening a florist would also be nice.”

“I’m want to be a race driver. I’ll be driving the coolest F1 at top speed!”

“…I, as long as I can live happily with everyone, then…I’ll be very happy.”

Everyone smiled at the shy girl who said that. Then, I also said

“Of course, that would be the best!”

…Yes, that would be the best. …That’s right, them, as well as me… towards Excalibur…we actually had no interest in it at all. …! My cherished dream, which I had hoped for, was to live an ordinary life like any other child…! Holy swords, suitability…we should just…in order to achieve our dreams…actually important…! I…covered my mouth as I sobbed. Finally, I recalled it. Finally, I remembered it again. I…as well as them…never wished for revenge. We only wanted to live. Nothing more. Even I understood that! I was well aware of it! That person’s voice, floated into my mind.

“—Live for me, and for yourself at the same time.”

The crimson haired woman who saved me—. And the most important person who also admired ane[161]—.

“—You definitely can’t die, idiot.”

The best friend who was supporting me—. Even so, the friends I was worrying about from the bottom of my heart—. I…am already happy enough. Why, what reason is there! I failed to notice it…. … Rias…nee-san, Ise-kun, I’m really a big idiot…. Looking ahead — everyone on the battlefield was also in tears. With their weapons dropped on the ground, they were sobbing and crying. Dulio-san said

“…These bubbles, are able to remind the people who touch them about their most precious memories, and their most important people. That’s all there is to this technique. But, this is the technique that I desired the most, so I used my Sacred Gear to create it.”

Bubbles which were able to make people remember what was most important to them—. These rainbow coloured bubbles, actually had such an ability…. —Dulio is the Church’s most gentle child. Sister Griselda’s words echoed in my mind. The technique which could make anyone gentle—. Known as the second most powerful Longinus ability, he intentionally didn’t use it for its power. Entirely using the method of another technique, he prevented harm and destruction. However, even though Cristaldi had tears streaming down his face, he lifted his sword again.

“…Nevertheless! If I don’t settle this now, our rebellion will be in vain! Dulio!”

With Dulio-san’s technique, he should also remember what’s most important to him. Even so, that man was currently relying on sheer willpower to hold on to Excalibur.

“—Well, let’s finish this.”

Griselda-san opened her six wings, and generated light at her palms to form the shape of a bow and arrow. …I heard once that the Queen of Hearts had a unique arrow of light. It wasn’t an attack—. Irina-san also followed and arose, lifting Hauteclere up.

“Hauteclere, lend me strength! I want to get even on the wielder of Excalibur for that because it hurts!”

Irina-san also spread her four Angel wings and flew off! Following that, I created a holy demonic sword. I…was surprised when I saw the blade of the holy demonic sword that I created. The edge… released an aura more pure than any previous time, and the blade itself was not dyed at all. For the first time, I felt that the holy demonic sword I created was exceptionally beautiful. It was as if the sword shone because it had discarded all the troubles of my mind. …The blade would cast light upon itself. Even the holy demonic swords that I created were for the same reason. I held up the sword which truly combined the holy and demonic, and ran forwards. Chasing after Irina-san who rushed out first, the two of us zigzagged towards our opponent! Cristaldi once again created numerous avatars, preparing to confuse Irina-san and I. As we cut them down one after the other, and continuously destroyed his tangible avatars, Irina and I felt that our blades were gradually getting closer and closer to the real body. Catching up, an avatar which I thought had already been destroyed, was actually made by using Mimic, and the real Cristaldi had jumped up above us. As the Mimic avatar was in the process of changing into a sword, my blade caught him! Two blades clashed against each other, emitting sparks! Although my frontal attack was blocked, my opponent’s holy sword began to change. Its holy aura was gradually being absorbed by my holy demonic sword, and my sword’s holy attribute was being strengthened. Cristaldi was greatly surprised by this phenomenon.

“—! Absorbing the holy aura of Excalibur using the power of the demonic attribute, in order to increase the power of its holy attribute?!”

…I was also surprised by the effect. I didn’t imagine that a holy demonic sword would exhibit this kind of ability…. Using demonic energy to absorb holy energy in order to enhance my sword’s holy attribute. On the other hand, using holy energy to absorb demonic energy, which enhances the demonic attribute could also be possible. —Studying the holy demonic sword would be good. Because the miracle that occurred is still a miracle even at this level.

…Reaching this conclusion, what Cao Cao said in Heaven came to mind. Did he already foresee this result? No, as he shouldn't know about this ability. However, he might have wanted to say that holy demonic swords contained many powers which were not yet known. If I were to completely unlock the power of holy demonic swords, being able to safely wield Gram would no longer be wishful thinking. My holy demonic sword had completely absorbed the holy aura of Cristaldi's Excalibur now. Then, Irina immediately slashed down with Hauteclere.

"Hauteclere! Use the power of purification!"

Hauteclere responded to its owners thoughts, and released its ability! Hauteclere had the power of purification. Once released, if received directly, even the great mentor of the warriors would be eliminated from this battle—.

"Haah!"

—However, whilst Cristaldi was in the process of receiving the force of purification, he exhaled with strength! Exhaling, he gripped the holy sword even tighter! The holy aura of Excalibur's replica was slowly returning. Once again, I used my holy demonic sword to absorb the holy energy, and Irina poured her strength into the final blow again—. Just when I was thinking about this, a large beam of light was fired from behind me.

"—My arrow is able to increase the power of an Angel!"

Griselda-san's arrow of light struck Irina-san's body. In an instant, an immense amount of light burst out of Irina-san, and further enhanced Hauteclere's power and ability! Cristaldi's holy sword — its holy aura was slowly and gradually fading away.

"—Sensei, here we go."

Dulio-san announced. Everyone raised their heads to look at the sky. —-A large thundercloud had formed in the sky, and a piercing cold air was beginning to blow everywhere. The blade of Cristaldi's holy sword has beginning to freeze. When even his feet were frozen with ice, an immensely large bolt of lightning descended from the sky,

even the barrier generated by the crosses surrounding us was easily destroyed, and the strike of lightning from the Sacred Gear then poured onto the body of the warriors' sensei—.

Cristaldi was lying on the ground. Holy demonic sword, Hauteclere, Griselda-san's arrow of support, and Dulio-san's Longinus which delivered the final blow—. Receiving these attacks, the warriors' sensei had finally fallen. Receiving treatment from the female warriors, fatal injuries were avoided. The warriors had already lost all their will to fight, most people were sitting on the floor in a depressed state. Those who suffered severe injuries in fighting against us, which was followed by their master Cristaldi being defeated, had now lost the battle. While lying on the ground, Cristaldi asked his student Dulio-san

"…If, you used those bubbles at the beginning, you would've won already. No, as long as you used your Balance Breaker, you should've been able to easily defeat us all at once."

…There was indeed that. As he said, if Dulio-san used those bubbles right at the beginning, or if he used his Balance Breaker, then the battle would've been one-sided. But, would that be good? As if answering the questions on my mind, Dulio-san said

"…I didn't want to use my power to do that as the warriors wouldn't have been satisfied, I simply decided to use that after a certain of period of time passed; rather than cutting the battle short, exhausting all your efforts would be better. Moreover, if I really had to release my Balance Breaker, the opponent must really have been beyond redemption, wicked people with no remorse."

It looks like he was considering the warriors' feelings. Indeed, instead of crushing their fighting spirit from the start, allowing them to vent their thoughts would prevent any future troubles. Precisely because he was a warrior, it allowed him to take into account the feelings of similar people. The sensei of the warriors smiled when he heard the reply of his own student.

"…Truly, you're too gentle…. …Known as warriors, ultimately we can only use our swords to communicate. It's your victory, Dulio. Well, do as you wish. But, let the others go. After all, I'm the one

that brought them here. Only I am guilty."

The defenceless Cristaldi spoke words which expressed that he would take responsibility for everything. The warriors raised objections against what their sensei said.

"Please wait a moment, Dulio!"

"Kill us if you must!"

"Sensei was only responding to our feelings!"

"We're the ones who are truly guilty!"

The warriors desperately stood up in an attempt to protect their sensei. Looking at this scene alone, it was obvious that this man was greatly respected by the warriors. However, their mentor shook his head.

"…Everyone here, has had their lives derailed by Devils or Vampires. I am also one of them. We simply couldn't find another way of life other than continuing to fight against those guys…. Well, give me a punishment. Those children, they will then be able to change their way of life."

Dulio-san — simply sighed, and shook his hand.

"…I won't do anything at all."

That's right, Dulio-san sat down on the ground, and didn't do anything.

"…Why?"

Being surprised at the same time, the teacher asked his student. The student only laughed.

"…If I defeated sensei, what good would it have done? And — as long as I live, I can freely eat good food. …In this world, there are far too many people who do not know what is valuable."

"…Too gentle, you really are, your heart is too kind."

Cristaldi muttered this as a thin stream of tears trickled out of his

eyes. For the warriors, this was undoubtedly the declaration of defeat. There were warriors who were kneeling down as they cried, and there were also warriors who smiled wryly, having discarded their weapons. Dulio-san said to Irina-san and I

“Yuuto, Irina-chan, go now. There are no problems here now. Go to Ise-kun’s side. I…will talk for a while longer with Cristaldi-sensei here.”

As Dulio-san said, we were quite concerned about the other side which was fighting a battle at the same time as us. I thought, if this side was able to finish their battle earlier, then I would rush over to that side. That was because I selfishly chose to take part in this side’s battle. Dulio-san knew this, so he made such a suggestion.

Irina-san and I nodded our heads, and prepared to leave. At this time, Dulio-san said

“By the way, next time, will you take a look at the facility here that the children live in? There are children who have also had the same

experiences as you living there. They are also my little brothers and sisters like you. Why don't we share a cake together?"

—. Dulio-san's expression…was very gentle from beginning to end. A gentler captain than anyone else. This was Dulio Gesualdo who was known as the [Trump Card].

"…Yeah, certainly."

I smiled, and Irina also nodded.

"Knight of the holy demonic sword."

Cristaldi called out to me, and only said one thing

"—His Eminence Strada, is the true monster."

…Since he was called as such by the man who was also known as a monster, he must really be an exceedingly powerful monster—. Irina-san and I kept this warning in mind as we quickly rushed towards the direction of the other side.

Part 3

The jisan who wielded Durandal — Vasco Strada led a group of warriors and had begun fighting in the schoolyard of Kuoh Academy (replica). A few minutes after the battle had started, I — Hyoudou Issei became surrounded by rainbow coloured bubbles everywhere. As soon as they appeared, a change occurred in the crowd of warriors — they began crying together. Some of our allies also began to cry. Huh? What's going on? Ddraig said inside of me

"…It looks like the ability of these bubbles is to stimulate intense memories of their targets, causing them to remember the things that they cherish."

Oh. But, why does nothing happen when I touch these bubbles?

"Hmm, this is just my thought: It may be because you, partner, are

always thinking about the things that you cherish the most, hence there is no effect. Don't you always have a lot of unnecessary worry on your mind?"

Indeed, whether it's something concerning the future, anything concerning my nakama [171], anything concerning oppai, as well as other things, I'm the type of person who always worries unnecessarily about them. Well, precisely because of this, nothing unusual happens to me when I touch these bubbles?

"Basically, that's what seems to have happened."

…Amidst all this fighting, my eyes were attracted to the oppai of the female swordsmen among the warriors more frequently than usual, which is…

"Ah, this could also be the effect of these bubbles, or perhaps not."

…Yes, whenever their oppai bounced, my gaze would be directed there more often than usual, is this the reason?

"These bubbles…came from their side?"

Rias looked up in surprise.

"Yes, that's right."

The person who replied to her — was Kiba! Irina was also beside him! What, the battle on the other side has already ended!

"These bubbles were made by Joker, and it's said that it makes the opponent remember things precious to them, thus dissolving their will to fight."

Irina's report agreed with Ddraig's thoughts. But, these were made by Dulio…Hehe, he's still only thinking about getting things done gently. However, there are still people whose will to fight wouldn't be weakened in such situations.

"Well these…these bubbles are really quite beautiful."

A smile appeared on Vasco Strada's wrinkled face. He was holding the replica of Durandal in his hand. We had been fighting against the

warriors up until now, yet this jisan [181] had not directly been participating in the battle…in any case, it appeared as though this jisan had given up before, but he was finally coming now. He definitely wanted the warriors to rampage for a while, allowing them to vent their anger. After that, he would join in — aside from him, the warriors at the frontline had already collapsed after being attacked by us as well as from the effects of those bubbles. Of the warriors who remained, it could be said that only that jisan was left unharmed. He began taking his vestments off. Underneath his clothing was — a body of thick, shiny, armour-like muscles, completely unlike an old man over eighty years old…a truly amazing body. Trained to this extent, it was completely disproportionate with his face which was covered by wrinkles! Coupled with a tall figure, he was reminiscent of a giant. Even Durandal's replica felt small in comparison. Strada took a step forwards. A piercing cold air enveloped my body for a while…and cold sweat streamed down my back. This pressure…I've only felt something like this from the evil dragon Cruach. And this jisan who is a human, gave me the same kind of feeling. His body, was a bottomless pit of horror. He spread his hands out, and with a smile on his wrinkled face he said

"—Well, it's time for some lecturing. Little Devil children, learn well."

A dense pressure was released — and everyone gasped. Even Saji and I, who were clad in a full suit of armour, couldn't help but feel a strong fighting spirit which permeated through our armour. Xenovia swallowed, and said

"…Durandal's replica. I've heard that its power is equivalent to one fifth of the original…but seeing that His Eminence is wielding it, there won't be such limitations."

This would become a showdown between Ex-Durandal and the Durandal replica…based on the power of the swords, Xenovia's genuine one should be far superior to the replica. However—. The first to charge ahead were Kiba and Irina who had just joined up with us. Moving with the momentum of victory from the previous battle, their strides were brimming with confidence. Strada-jisan didn't move, and he didn't even lift his sword up. He didn't seem to be careless, and neither did he seem at ease. Then, Kiba's holy

demonic sword approached him at high speed. —However, using only one hand, he caught the holy demonic sword! Seeing his own weapon being blocked by someone's hand, Kiba had a surprised expression as he looked back and forth between his sword and Strada's face. He wanted to pull his sword away, but the sword remained motionless. The holy demonic sword was being held with immense power. That jisan was nodding his head [MmHmm].

"Your swordsmanship isn't bad. It's very accurate, and you don't hesitate against humans. But"

A sharp metallic sound reverberated in all directions — Kiba's holy demonic sword had been shattered by his bare hand.

"It's too blunt. You haven't trained enough."

After Strada said that, he swung his fist at Kiba! In the blink of an eye, Kiba raised the broken holy demonic sword to defend — however, the blow was too heavy, and he was sent flying through the air quite far!

"Your Eminence, how rude!"

Following that, Irina slashed at him using Hauteclere — even so, the sword was stopped between two of his fingers, and he then threw her and the sword away using his strength!

"We'll use magic then!"

Rossweisse-san who was in the rear guard created numerous magic circles, which fired out projectile attacks of various attributes! That jisan didn't dodge it, and just when he was about to be hit by the magic attacks, he simply extended his finger, and rapidly touched them all. The magic attacks which he touched lost their power and dissipated into the air. Seeing the result, Rossweisse-san was extremely surprised!

"—Hm!? With that magic — you disassembled it!?"

"This so-called magic, is a calculation — so, using the theory behind its formula to oppose it, it's possible to cancel them out or destroy them. Especially the techniques of young magicians, they're

unrefined and not concise. As long as a slight flaw is found, it'll be completely useless — as long as its structure is known, it can be disintegrated with power."

Noooooo! I was shaking my head in utter disbelief at this phenomenon! My nakama seemed to be thinking the same thing, and were just as astonished! After all, he only moved his finger around, yet he was able to decompose Rossweisse-san's magic spells! This jiji[191] was way too surprising! Even if he understood the structure of the spell, who could possibly decompose spells with a single finger!? From the perspective of other magicians, Rossweisse-san's spells have been praised and admired! Yet, he glosses over it just by calling her young!?

"In that case, I'm going!"

Gasper turned himself into a dark beast, and dashed forth! Perhaps because he was influenced by me, Gasper in this state was particularly militant, and always had the style of charging forward! And because he's always with me in hand to hand combat, he's now able to confront people directly! The current Gasper is quite strong! Strada-jisan finally got into a fighting stance, and pulled his right fist back. The muscles on his right arm swelled up to a ridiculous size.

"Hmph!"

Exhaling with a breath full of vigour, his right fist moved straight forward! Gasper who was charging straight towards him from the front dodged just in the nick of time — the buildings behind him all collapsed from the impact of his punch against the air!

"—This can't be real, right!? That's the aftermath of his punch alone!? That's on par with Sairaorg isn't it!?"

Rias expressed her amazement! It's just as she said! Aside from Sairaorg-san, there's actually another person who can destroy objects with only the shockwaves from their fist! On top of that, this was a human, and also a jiji! Xenovia said to us

"His Eminence's punch is known as the [Holy Punch]. Even his punch contains holy energy! Be careful everyone, Devils will suffer

immense damage from that if they're hit!"

In such situations, one could only make a wry smile! Gasper evaded the punch, and charged towards his body! Seeing this happen, Strada raised Durandal for the first time. A dense holy aura radiated out, and enveloped the entire sword! Gasper began punching at his large body! Each of these attacks carried enough power to send an ordinary Devil flying! However, that old man Strada used the body of Durandal's replica or shifted his own body to easily parry each of these attacks! He was using power to counter power…! Gasper wanted to supress Durandal — but instead he was overpowered and pushed back by its immense holy aura! A portion of the darkness covering him peeled off, and a small part of Gasper's flesh could be seen.

"—What's going on, that holy sword actually has this much power…!?"

Gasper's darkness was extremely tough, and couldn't be stripped off by any ordinary holy aura. After all, he was known as the incarnation of the Demon God Balor. Even in a short period of time, to be able to peel off Gasper's darkness was evidence of this old man being beyond common sense.

"Well, I'm coming next!"

Saji was wearing jet-black armour, and ignited black flames, then extended out numerous lines! Strada, who was hit by these lines simply swung Durandal with a light horizontal motion — everyone present felt a momentary chill, and then ducked down! Something flew over our heads at high speed! I turned my head to look behind at the replica buildings in this artificial space. Perhaps the waves which he released were too sharp, thus the buildings didn't collapse at all, and there was only a horizontal line across the buildings. Even the glass windows had not been shattered from it…how sharp was the wave that he released to leave behind just a horizontal line…! Saji's lines had also been cut cleanly in two, and even the black flames had vanished for now after the release of that holy wave!

"Damn it!"

Saji fearlessly continued to release vast black flames! So long as it hit, the curse would take effect, and the flames which never died out would burn the opponent! Alternatively, it could also drain the strength of the opponent! However, all of Saji's black flames were erased by a light swing of Durandal's replica! Even with the shockwaves of his punch, Saji's black flames could be blown away! Saji determined that direct attacks would be useless, so he created a black wall of flames surrounding Strada on all sides! This was Saji's best barrier! But, that jisan turned around, and using the momentum of his rotation to swing Durandal, he effortlessly split the wall of flames in two! Seeing all of his black flames being extinguished, Saji cried

"What is this, that jiji!?"

Exactly! What exactly is this, that jiji! This could be called unreasonable, or that it exceeded common sense, and against all the reason, he supressed them with just brute force! Strada shook his head as he said

"It's because you rely too much on these powers given by God — Sacred Gears."

He raised his fist, and declared

"There is no particular reason for my strength. But my own flesh and blood is the result of constant training, and the experience of countless battles. As long as you always maintain your faith in God, and do not forget to care about your body, power will be built in your soul. Children — is there any power within your soul?"

……Even if you say that, we also have things that we cannot back down on. We're also known as attackers of the power type. Moreover, his words emphasised power, known as [Power Idiots?? lit. (muscles even in the brain)], this was an obvious challenge to us of the Gremory household! Everyone seemed to have the same thoughts as me, and the rising energy inside them could be seen from the expression of their faces. We've fought until now, even if we stayed silent, we were also able to tacitly match this guy's fighting style!

“Jisan, I also need to get serious.”

After I announced this, I began the crimson chant!

“—I, who is about to awaken, am the Sekiryuutei who holds the truth of the king up high! Holding the infinite hopes and unbreakable dreams and walking the path of righteousness! I will become an Emperor of Crimson Dragon—”

“And I will lead you to the Path of Heaven, glowing in deep crimson light—!”

[Cardinal Crimson Full Drive!!!!]

Wearing crimson armour, I opened my dragon wings, and flew to the front! I already knew very well that even if I moved around in mid-air as I tried to get closer that it would be meaningless! In that case, I might as well just use high-speed to close the distance in an instant, and then simply go for a direct attack! I changed my right arm into the Welsh Dragonic Rook’s, and then attacked!

[Boost Boost Boost Boost Boost Boost Boost Boost Boost Boost Boost Boost Boost!!]

I increased my power and concentrated it into my right fist! A huge amount of dragonic power was gathered!

[Solid Impact Booster!!!!]

Close combat — this single strike was of the highest level! With my right fist raised high for this heavy blow, attempting to block it from the front was not a good idea! He didn’t intend to evade, and instead opened his stance! However, if my deduction was correct, this old man would — that’s right, this old man with such power was called Vasco Strada, he would actually…would actually! Defend against my punch head on! He held the Durandal replica in front of his chest, blocking my fist! My Solid Impact fiercely collided with the Durandal replica, and the aftershock of our collision blew away everything in the surrounding area! …The force of my punch…had been completely nullified by him! What kind of joke is this! I just unleashed a full-powered attack! That jisan was actually able to withstand that blow using the replica of Durandal!? The two people who just

clashed and blocked each other naturally jumped backwards to increase their distance. At the same time that I finished my attack, Kiba and Irina charged forth again! Then Koneko-chan and Akeno-san also came to assist! Kiba and Irina repeatedly slashed at him, but Strada-jisan did the same as he did before, using minimal movements of Durandal or his body to dodge or deflect the assault! At this time, Koneko-chan momentarily grew and sent a punch with the power of purification towards him, but the old warrior used the hilt of Durandal to block this attack, and then actually pushed it back!

“Holy Lightning!”

Akeno-san summoned lightning, and shaped it into the form of a large dragon! They were Holy Lightning Dragons! And there were five of them! The number has increased compared to before, and the density of the holy lighting had also increased! The large dragons of holy lightning eagerly moved towards Strada!

“—Descended from the angel known as the Lightning of God! It truly is beautiful!”

While Strada was praising Akeno-san’s attack, Durandal’s blade was still wrapped in a holy aura, and then it was swung down in an instant! The wave which was released was clearly more potent than that which was released by Xenovia. The enormous surging wave completely blew the Holy Lightning Dragons away! In addition, this wave showed no signs of weakening, and continued to fly towards us!

“Shield!”

Rossweisse-san took a step forward, and conjured several layers of magic circles of strong defensive magic! Each layer of the strong magical barriers was progressively destroyed by the Durandal’s replica, and the approaching wave loomed ahead of us! —However, Rossweisse-san created layers of barriers once more, and then finally negated Strada’s attack! …However, in order to nullify this wave, a significant number of defensive magic circles had been deployed…at the least, Rossweisse-san used twenty layers. Even though she had the trait of the [Rook] to boost defensive power, she still needed so many…! Once again, I was in awe at this old

warrior’s skill in using Durandal!

“It’s not over yet!”

The last person to rush out was the current wielder of Durandal, Xenovia! She wielded Ex-Durandal, using it in a combined mode to slam it down at high speed and with the power of Destruction! The old warrior used his replica to block Xenovia’s attack, and it felt as though he was smiling in enjoyment.

“Very good! That’s it! That’s just right! There’s no need for deliberation! Listen up, warrior Xenovia! Even if you assimilate Durandal and Excalibur, the essence of Durandal is — pure power! Which is why you were chosen by it! You should not deny it! Power should not be denied!”

While he was resisting Xenovia’s attack, Strada still repeatedly slashed his sword, as if illustrating how a sword should be used, conveying the core essence of a sword. In the midst of the clash between the genuine holy sword with the added power of Destruction and the replica, Strada looked straight at Xenovia and said to her

“—However, there’s more than one way to represent power. That sword’s form, is that really what you want it to appear as?”

“—Hmm!!”

Hearing that jisan’s question, Xenovia made an expression as if she had noticed something. Xenovia jumped back for the time being, and then — she meaningfully stared at Ex-Durandal. Strada began to smile as he saw this…was this something that only a wielder of Durandal would know about…? Then Rias straightened her body! Her entire body was enveloped in a destructive aura, and a huge sphere of magic had formed above her head!

“—Well, how about this?”

—Extinguish Star! Rias’s ultimate attack! She concentrated her magic to produce it while I went ahead to fight!

“This will result in death if you don’t avoid it!”

After Rias declared that, she released that massive attack! Although the sphere of destruction moved forward slowly, no one could possibly remain unharmed if they came into contact with it. This unparalleled attack was merciless, and even the body of an evil dragon could be destroyed. But Rias deliberately made such a declaration before releasing it. Which also meant — she was letting him escape. Being hit by that would result in inevitable annihilation. But even so, Rias decided to use this move precisely because she was in awe at the opponent. However, the old warrior seemed to have no intention of evading! He simply smiled, and faced Rias's sphere of destruction directly!

"Well well…this thing might be a bit difficult for my old bones — but."

He raised Durandal's replica and pointed it towards the sky — a vast amount of holy aura began to cover the blade. Facing one side as it slowly absorbed the objects around it, the sphere of destruction was approaching — then the replica of Durandal was swung down! The light released was blindingly bright, and we could only close our eyes in the face of such intense light…! When we opened our eyes, the first thing which we saw was — the scene of Rias's Extinguish Star sliced apart!

"—Ah."

Rias was speechless at the sight of this. This was only to be expected. Even against an evil dragon, it was completely defenceless against this technique. Yet an old man, a human, was able to destroy it using the replica of a holy sword. We were also quite shocked by this. Strada's shoulders were heaving as he breathed…after all, it was true that he cut the Extinguish Star. Rias could only smile mirthlessly.

"…After this, I have no choice but to smile bitterly."

As Strada adjusted his breathing, he said

"—Listen well. Durandal is able to cut [Everything]. Even if it's the Bael's power of Destruction, that is no exception."

He said to us, as if giving Durandal an introduction. …So if Durandal

is used properly, even that can be cut…! Well, when Xenovia is really able to master Durandal, there won't be anything in this world that she won't be able to cut…! Koneko-chan made a stiff smile.

"…Really, is the Church able to rely solely on this ojisan? I think that…"

…Yes. Relying on this jisan alone, is the Church able to survive? After all, even the highest class of Devils have been defeated at the hands of Church warriors…if such a rare old man was born in this world, indeed even the highest class of Devils could be destroyed.

"—Well, it should be my turn next right?"

After saying this, the person who took a step forward was — Arthur Pendragon who had been quietly watching from the side! He was wearing glasses, a suit, and smiling as usual. However, held in his hand was the legend of legends which was wrapped in a dense and thick aura — The Holy King Sword Collbrande.

"Hoh…I wouldn't have imagined that I'd be able to see that at my age…"

Strada looked at the holy sword in Arthur's hand, and sighed in admiration. Arthur fearlessly replied in response with

"It is quite regrettable that the sword you hold is not genuine — I really wanted to use my body to withstand its power."

Arthur quietly approached Strada, and in response, Strada also began to move forward. They did so until they were within reach of each other's swords, and there was also no need to prepare a stance. Eventually, they reached the point where they were directly in front of each other, and they then stopped. They looked as though they were a jovial young gentleman and old warrior, but the intense pressure which they released from their bodies was unreal. It caused the space between those two to become distorted. Then, both of them finally disappeared from that spot! Clang clang clang, the shrill metallic noise of two clashing swords reverberated in all directions, and we looked up towards the sky! That was because we felt a presence above us! And sure enough, two people had flown up

in the air, and their swords fiercely collided as they descended! From when they had jumped all the way until they began to fall, it was only a very short period of time. However, in the time that the two people exchanged blows, it felt as though it was an extremely intense battle. Several techniques flew across from each side, and the two people were vehemently opposing each other. Slashing down from above, slicing from below to above, an occasional thrust, or deflecting attacks aside, both were swinging and slashing ferociously, yet there were also small slashes — the two people were engaging in a high-speed slashing showdown in mid-air — aura was overflowing from both of their swords, and as a result of that aura, all the replica buildings in the surrounding area crumbled and collapsed.

“…Formidable.”

“Ah…”

“……”

The swordsmen Irina, Xenovia and Kiba were speechless. They intently watched the intense swordplay battle occurring in the air. No one batted an eyelid as they focused their attention on the battle between the legendary Holy King Sword and the legendary old warrior. For the three people who were watching Arthur and Strada’s battle, closing their eyes would be shameful as a swordsman. Arthur and Strada continued to go at each other as they descended, and when they finally landed on the ground, without any time to catch their breath, they ran towards each other with their holy swords clashing again! They ran sideways as they were attacking each other! Between the attacks of these two people, large cracks appeared on the floor, and the ground had also been easily destroyed. Both of their bodies had also changed. Although neither of them had been hit cleanly, Strada’s thoroughly trained body had suffered several cuts, and the parts of Arthur’s suit which had been shredded were quite conspicuous. Both of them had ecstatic expressions, and it appeared that both of them were happy from the bottom of their hearts about this slashing confrontation— The Holy King Sword gathered a calm aura, and Arthur suddenly thrust it in a strange direction. Then, a hole was pierced in that

space, and the blade disappeared into it! Strada seemed to have noticed something, thus he bent his upper body backwards greatly and then horizontally from a spot near where he was, a sword flew out! So that was what it was, Arthur was able to use the Holy King Sword to pierce a hole in space, and then send it towards a position close to his opponent? Speaking of which, Arthur had once used a holy sword to create a tear in space, which he escaped into afterwards. Was this an ability of the Holy King Sword, or one of Arthur's techniques? Although that was unknown, it was certain that Arthur could move between space, and that he could also send his sword directly next to Strada. Next, the irregular old warrior Strada had moved his body, and dodged the attack from an almost certain striking position! Was this real!? He was even able to evade such an unexpected move!? While being attacked normally, Strada still easily dodged even Arthur's space transportation technique which couldn't be detected. …If it was me, I definitely wouldn't be able to detect even a feint, and would certainly receive their attack every time. But that old warrior only changed his stance and sword position! In addition, this was performed while in the midst of an intense sword fight, thus it was easy to understand that there was an attack which I could not recognise with the naked eye. If it was me — there would be no way to evade the Holy King Sword; my body would be continually consumed by that holy aura, and I would eventually fall to the ground. There were many techniques, surprise attacks, and on top of that, the power of holy swords couldn't be underestimated… for me, Arthur was the type that I'd have horrible compatibility against.

"…Arthur hasn't yet used his full power. Of course, Strada also…"

Even Kiba couldn't estimate the true strength of these two swordsmen, and bit his lip with a reluctant look. I'm afraid that he saw that his own strength was incomparable to those two, and at the same time because he understood the strength of those two, he could only grit his teeth. …Me too, my friend. …In this world, why are there such strong guys…. Moreover, he has the body of a human. The Vali team's swordsman Arthur Pendragon, the wielder of the Holy King Sword. He is strong indeed…! The two swordsmen continued their breath-taking battle for a few minutes — but it

suddenly came to an end. Both people exchanged a heavy blow with each other, and they jumped backwards before the sparks had disappeared. Both of them readjusted their sword stance…however, Arthur suddenly put his sword down. He adjusted his glasses, and smiled as he said

"…Wonderful — but, let's stop. If this continues, I won't be able to get over the shock."

Arthur said a string of strange words, but Strada seemed to understand, and he also put down his sword for now.

"…Sorry, young swordsman."

The old warrior began to smile wryly, indicating that he understood Arthur's behaviour. Arthur smiled, then turned around to leave. When he came past our side, he only said one thing

"…If we met thirty years earlier, no, twenty years, it would certainly be the best battle. If it continued…it would only invite sadness."

Arthur spoke in a lonesome manner, and then he left. … Was this known as the pride that only a swordsman could understand? Next, we were the ones who were left…but, what could we do? In order to stop this jisan — should we really be serious about it? …I made up my mind, and made wyverns appear from the gems of my armour. As the old warrior saw this, he smiled joyously.

"I have heard of it. The Sekiryuutei even has the ability to modify entire environments — indeed after receiving that attack, even I won't be able to avoid death."

…My Longinus Smasher, does he already know about it? Since I last used it, it's already been more than a month. The charge has already been completed. Kokabiel's words resurfaced in my mind. It was about the previous wielder of Durandal — that is, it was related to this jisan Strada. —The previous wielder's strength was far beyond the scope of common sense! …Strength beyond comprehension, it was so convincing that I was speechless…! For this reason, if I don't use my unique abilities then this old man won't back down! However, the person who inserted herself in front of me

was Xenovia. Xenovia took a step forward, and confronted Strada-jisan. She held Ex-Durandal out in front of her body — and then separated it into two swords. From Ex-Durandal, the handle of Excalibur could be separated from Durandal…and what Xenovia just did, was separate another legendary holy sword from Durandal. In other words, she was holding Durandal with her right hand, and Excalibur itself with her left hand. This wasn't just any Excalibur, it wasn't Rapidly, neither was it Destruction, nor was it Mimic, but it was the true Excalibur itself. She made a dual wielding stance using both Durandal and Excalibur. This also meant that she had released Durandal from the suppression of Excalibur. Seeing this, Strada's entire body quivered, as if he was excited about this fight for the first time!

"That's right. That's how it should be! From my perspective as the previous wielder of Durandal, Ex-Durandal is a questionable combination. Durandal itself is a finished product, Excalibur is also a finished product…why is such a combination necessary? The reason is because you're unable to control Durandal, and thus you foolishly used Excalibur as an [auxillary]. You…are a prodigy when it comes to single or dual wielding — don't deny it. As long as you believe in power, power will materialise itself!"

…That's right. Xenovia was unable to control Durandal's aggressive aura, so she supressed it by using Excalibur as a sheath to enclose it. And just as that jisan said, Xenovia preferred a dual wielding fighting style. Excalibur Destruction + Durandal, or Durandal + Ascalon — she had currently returned to her previous style. In one hand was Durandal and in the other was Excalibur. That's right, this was the fighting style that she had when we met her. In an instant — the two separated holy swords each began to radiate a dense holy aura. Their aura continued to increase, without any signs of stopping. The holy aura released was immensely pure and strong, causing the people nearby to tremble; this was something that could not be felt from Xenovia's sword in the past. Strada's eyes became moist.

"…I was finally able to meet you again, Durandal. That's right, this is Durandal's true form. Come, warrior Xenovia. There's no need to

consider anything, that's all. Durandal's true essence is only in destruction."

"…Yes!"

Holding their holy swords, the two swordsmen who exemplified power gradually reduced their distance. Their pace was leisurely, but there was a certain strength behind it. Both of them moved until they were within reach of each other's sword, and then they began a battle of swords! Xenovia's two swords and Strada's sword exuded a silver radiance while sparks flew off them as they fiercely and brilliantly collided with each other!

"Aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaarrrhhhh!"

"Haaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaahhhh!"

The shockwaves from the power of destruction alone caused the entire battlefield space to tremor, everything around those two began to collapse! The replicated buildings began to collapse one after the other, and deep fissures also appeared on the surface of the ground! Even the top section of this space began to crack, and a kaleidoscopic pattern could be seen through the dimensional crack! The scene in front of my eyes was the same as when I fought against Sairaorg-san, and even more destructive than that time. Like that time, it was a product of pure destruction and damage. The destructive output which was generated from both Durandal and the replica knocked us to the ground, and sometimes we even felt pain in our bodies…cracks even appeared in Saji's and my armour. Just how much power had to be colliding to produce shockwaves with such an effect! It was afraid that in the world that those two people resided in, only they could understand — that power and strength. This battle couldn't be replicated by people who didn't think in terms of power. It was only possible to communicate through the use of body language here! Xenovia formed a cross with Durandal and Excalibur, and then swung them down simultaneously! Strada used the replica to parry this blow head on! This attack of destruction x destruction truly embodied destruction, but the opponent was also a power monster!

"Gyaaaaaaaaaaaaaaahhhh!"

The two legendary holy swords were deflected by the replica! — However, the price for that was high. Cracks appeared on the replica's blade, and the old warrior's breathing became heavy. It was clear to see that he was becoming exhausted. Strada kneeled down with one knee on the ground. If this continued, Xenovia would become dominant because of the gap in their physical ability. The previous wielder of Durandal who possessed incredible strength — was an eighty year old man after all, his physical condition couldn't be helped. Xenovia approached Strada who was kneeling on the ground. Just when it was time for the winner to be decided, someone injected themselves into the space between those two — it was the young Cardinal called Teodoro. The youth's face was filled with tears as he stood in front of Xenovia, covering Strada who was behind him. Seeing his behaviour, Xenovia appeared confused. The boy had tears streaming down his face as he said

"…Please forgive His Eminence Strada. The fault is mine."

"Your Eminence Teodoro…please stand down. The decisions were made by this old man."

The boy stopped Strada who wanted to get up.

"Enough already! It's already enough! Already, enough has been done! If even you cease to exist, I…how can I do anything!"

The boy turned around, and showed the pure white wings which were evidence of his existence as a [Miracle Child]. He distraughtly said

"…My…father and mother…were both killed by Devils."

His eyes looked into ours — they were filled with sorrow.

"…I will never forgive Devils! I will never let Devils get away!"

The boy screamed. …In the face of his words, we were speechless. …Both his parents were killed by Devils? He was a [Miracle Child] — the half-breed of a human and an Angel, while his father and mother…were killed by Devils? Strada hugged the boy with a sorrowful expression, and he quietly said

“…An alliance is also nice, as it is a form of peace. But — in that case, some people will not be saved, and some people will be angered. Whether it’s His Eminence Teodoro, or the warriors you faced today, they took up their swords after their lives were derailed by Devils.”

……

…That’s right, this so-called peace won’t occur for absolutely everybody. Since we’ve experienced peace, then there will also be people who have experienced suffering…but, even if that’s the case, we also…!

“We—”

Just when I was about to speak, someone spoke over me.

“We!”

—It was Kiba. Kiba said

“…We only want to live peacefully. You have your own sense of justice, and you have your own values. However, my master Rias Gremory, as well as Ise-kun, Akeno-san, Koneko-chan, Asia-san, Xenovia, Gasper-kun, Irina-san, Rossweisse-san, Ravel-san, and the Sitri household, are all my many nakama who live in this town; we’ve survived life and death situations together and have been through good and bad times.”

Kiba seemed as if he had removed a mask, and his expression was more candid than ever before. Xenovia also agreed with Kiba

“It’s true. We all support each other, we’re nakama who have risked our lives fought together through everything. Even if His Eminence Strada and His Eminence Teodoro don’t recognise it, we fight with pride! Even if someone is unsatisfied, we will continue to fight for the people who believe in us!”

Hearing the two swordsmen — what the Gremory [Knights] said, a satisfied smile appeared on Vasco Strada’s wrinkled face.

“…I see, their eyes have a powerful expression, and their will was

strong. Princess Rias Gremory, you have a pair of good [Knights].”

“Yes, they are also the [Knights] that I am proud of.”

Rias was also proud of the two [Knights]. Although Kiba and Xenovia were similar in that they were both from Church facilities, the path that they followed in life was completely different. And now, while serving under the same master, through their mutual experiences, they began to have similar ideas again—. Irina also approached the two brave [Knights], and stood beside them.

“Your Eminence Strada, Your Eminence Teodoro, I also — believe that evil Devils exist. But—”

Irina turned her gaze towards me.

“There are also good Devils. It’s the same as humans…even in other mythologies, there are also good and evil Gods.”

After listening to this, Strada laughed loudly and satisfyingly.

“Hahahaha! Ah…I see, I see. However, as an Angel, you talked about Pagan Gods [TN] … yes, this is the result of an alliance, but this also means the beginning of a new era…”

The old warrior had his hand on his chin as he thought. But, it looked like he was somewhat happy — however, Strada picked his sword up again.

“—However, the things you have discarded have brought you to a very different place. Your Eminence Teodoro, please stand aside. Let me show you this old man’s Durandal’s final moment.”

…His willpower still hadn’t decreased! His eyes were still burning with a passionate flame! Even if he would die with us, he still insisted on going on until the end! However, his strength did not return. If he continued to fight, with or without any sacrifices, we would still win in the near future…but, was that alright? Was it really alright for this to continue? As I was contemplating this, the young Cardinal cried and tried to stop Strada.

“It’s already enough! It’s already enough! Your Eminenece Strada!

I…that's enough! You and His Eminence Cristaldi, and the warriors who fought for me…that's already enough! …When my feelings and frustration were directly communicated to these people, we could have retreated. …So, I should receive the punishment! I will use my life as payment!"

From his expression, I could feel his strong determination. The boy understood his actions and his words, and he was also prepared for his punishment. Strada revealed a kind smile, and he gently stroked the boy's head.

"…A child complaining about injustice is something that happens in any era. Your complaint was very noble, and very pure. Because of this, I would take up my sword again, and the warriors will follow you. And what I wanted to see the most was — them completely accepting yours and the warriors' beliefs; they didn't exclude us, they actually accepted us, and listened to our beliefs. They…should have already thought deeply about how to stop us. How to accept our beliefs without crushing them — at that time, we had already lost."

"—Uh."

Hearing what the old warrior said, the young Cardinal was speechless, and lowered his head. …From the very beginning, this jisan already had an understanding of our side's situation…even so; he still carried the dissatisfaction of the boy and the warriors, and took up his sword…. Strada said

"In my mind and Cristaldi's mind, we asked for God's forgiveness. His Eminence Teodoro and the warriors are still young. This incident was caused because I fanned the flames'''— after hearing what was said in this battle, and with my death, they will be able to find a new way of life."

—Ah! This jisan! He intends to shoulder everything!? From the beginning, for the purpose of understanding the dissatisfaction of the warriors, he assumed full responsibility for it— Hearing Strada's confession, the warriors all wailed.

"Your Eminence!"

“Please don’t say such things!”

“Your Eminence, if it’s my life, I would offer it gladly!”

“We were already prepared to go to Purgatory!”

Everyone shed tears. All of the hardened warriors were trying to stop the old warrior’s atonement. Looking at this scene alone, it was evident that the warriors truly admired Strada. In the face of that jisan’s beliefs, we — also had troubled expressions, and were unable to decide whether or not to fight. When both sides had become weary of battle —

“How about you allow me to get rid of you all ♪”

Suddenly, a different voice echoed around everywhere! Everyone looked around in every direction, and eventually fixed onto a single point. Standing there was someone dressed in gothic style clothing; a woman holding a parasol — no, a witch, Walburga! This person! Intruding again! Everyone pointed their weapons towards her! The witch made a delightful smile.

“At the final sweet happy ending, I step in ♪ — don’t you think that this just adds fuel to the fire?”

As she finished speaking, Walburga tapped her foot on the ground. From that, a countless number of magic circles appeared and began to spread and expand! The light emitted from them at the same time shone brightly, and illuminated us! Emerging from the countless transportation type magic circles was — a huge swarm of mass-produced evil dragons! Ten, twenty, thirty…the number of evil dragons which gradually emerged from the transportation magic circles was almost in the triple digit range! Really, in this situation, this person had to summon these mass-produced evil dragons! Covering a nearby area completely like black paint — all of them were evil dragons! The witch stood before the swarm of evil dragons, and began to laugh.

“Well, let’s have all you evil dragons show them your skills ♪ ”

Walburga extended her hand out with an extremely innocent, yet extremely evil smile, but just when she was about to issue orders to

the evil dragons, Rossweisse-san smiled eloquently.

“—I knew that this would happen.”

Rossweisse-san snapped her fingers. After that, the entire space began to emit a silvery light! The sky, replicated buildings, the ground, everything was shining with a brilliant silver light! Suddenly, the evil dragons seemed to lose their strength, and slumped onto the ground! Even their eyes had lost their resolve, and they became motionless!

“—Uh! This is…! What’s happening!?”

As a result of the unexpected events, Walburga was surprised. We were also quite surprised! How, what was happening!? Rossweisse-san smiled confidently as she said

“For Qlippoth to infiltrate here, as well as summoning evil dragons, I anticipated this a while ago. This space was designed and constructed with my own barrier technique. If evil dragons are summoned here, their functioning abilities will be sealed.”

—Ah! Really! After predicting that these guys would invade, the seal to restrict the movements of these summoned evil dragons was embedded into the space!? But, for them to come here, that was also something predictable. They intended to rely on numbers to overwhelm us. However, during the research into the sealing for Trihexa, Rossweisse-san thought of this barrier technique! Rossweisse-san looked towards Asia.

“Asia previously won over mass-produced evil dragons, and this technique used that as a foundation. With her permission, I investigated her mass-produced evil dragons. When I was creating this barrier, I embedded the technique to stop their movements inside.”

How amazing! Using the clues that she gained from the evil dragons that Asia and Fafnir brought over, she was able to produce such a beautiful success! In that case, completing the seal for Trihexa was within reach! She was indeed a talented Nordic woman! Hearing this, Walburga frowned — but, she suddenly began to laugh.

“Waha, that’s rather scary. Well, I think I’ll retreat now ♪”

She had just arrived, yet as soon as she found it disadvantageous, she wanted to escape! She was truly quite determined to escape! Walburga created a magic circle for transportation below her feet, and intended to retreat — but, the light from the magic circle faded, and it gradually disappeared.

“…It didn’t activate? Transportation was sealed?”

Walburga spoke involuntarily with a surprised tone.

“—No, just that all paths have been cut off.”

There was another voice! Turning around to look, standing there was [Slash Dog] Ikuse Tobio followed by a black dog! Walburga was shocked to see Ikuse-san there.

“—[Slash Dog]!”

Ikuse-san spoke to her as if she was an old acquaintance

“Yo, long time no see, witch of the purple flames. How is the Holy Cross you inherited? Sorry, I’ve cut off all the magic transportation escape routes you prepared outside this space.”

Hearing what he said, I looked up at the sky — I could only see the tips of countless swords pointing downwards, much like icicles…at the top of this vast space, swords were growing out everywhere…? The twisted blades emitted an ominous glow, and the blades also had spell like patterns engraved on them. Walburga was dismayed when she saw this!

“Y-You’ve got to be kidding! I used a combination of tens of thousands of random spells for that technique!? In the short period of time after I infiltrated, all of them—”

“That is correct, all of them were severed. After all, I work behind the scenes, so it’s my job to do.”

“……Uh! Are you really a human..!?”

Walburga was at a loss for words. I didn’t know if it was entirely

because her technique was destroyed in an instant, but she seemed to be looking at Ikuse-san as is she was looking at a monster. Ikuse-san said to me

“Quickly decide on the final attack, Hyoudou Issei-kun. The dragon of legend should shine on the centre of the stage.”

“Ah, yes!”

All right! Thanks to Rossweisse-san and Ikuse-san, the function of all the evil dragons had been stopped, and Walburga had successfully been trapped in here! Although this was somewhat rude to that jisan Strada, but let me get rid of this witch first! All the members of [DxD] had focused their attention onto Walburga. It was because everyone knew that the most dangerous person here was this witch. Walburga could feel the hostility arising from everyone, and laughed quietly, before laughing out loudly.

“Ahahahahahahaha!”

Walburga spread her arms out! A roar came from behind her and then purple flames ignited behind her, forming the shape of a cross!

“Well then, I’ll let you experience it! My Balance Breaker!”

Walburga lifted her spirits in one breath, and the purple flames responded by expanding greatly! They gradually changed shape, continued to grow, and eventually formed a certain shape! That was an extremely large cross! And tied onto it was — a large eight-headed dragon! It was massive! Its enormous body was around two hundred metres in length! However, I was familiar with that thing! — It was Yamata no Orochi! No wonder it seemed familiar. Just the other day, I fought against the swordsman who was manipulated by it! Walburga stood in front of Yamata no Orochi which was made of purple flames as she said

“—This is my subspecies Balance Breaker: [Incinerate Antiphon Calvario] ♪”

Strada looked at the evil dragon bound to the cross and then said

“I’ve heard about the ability of the current user of the Holy Cross; it

changes its shape and features depending on the object which is bound to the cross. Yamata no Orochi has been bound currently, isn't that right?"

So her subspecies Balance Breaker actually had this kind of ability! After hearing this, the witch said

"Yaegaki-kun's sword only had half the soul of [Yamata no Orochi] in it, while the remaining half was absorbed by my purple flames. That's because this Longinus's true form is an independent type ♪"

…Of all the things to absorb, it was an evil dragon! Using a holy relic to bind an evil dragon's soul, and then reproducing its power was really quite chaotic! But, although it was an evil dragon, its body was made of the holy relic's flames. Devils would inevitably be annihilated if they touched those flames. However, there was someone who bravely took a step forward — it was Xenovia. She held Excalibur and Durandal in each hand as she moved forward.

"Allow me. Currently, it should be possible."

Her expression was full of confidence, as if it was assurance of her bold actions. In the previous fight against Strada, perhaps Xenovia already mastered the true essence of Durandal's power. But, I'm also going to accompany you! I stood beside Xenovia, and pointed at Walburga as I said

"Now, you're going to be defeated by us!"

After I said that, I ordered my wyverns to fly ahead! Xenovia stood there quietly, and began raising the power of the two holy swords. I was clearly able to see the extremely dense and concentrated holy aura which enveloped the swords!

"You think that two people alone can do something to me!?"

I dodged the storm of spells that Walburga released as well as Yamata no Orochi's breath, and then began to increase that power! The opponent was female. Both Dress Break and Bilingual could be used! But, Azazel-sensei had said that Walburga might use magic to defend against those techniques! Well, all I need to do — is break through her magical defences! I ordered the wyverns to surround

Walburga! I allowed them to freely soar through the air! Walburga felt annoyed, and wanted to shoot them down with magic. But simply shooting down one or two of them was insignificant! As long as one of them hit her, then it would satisfy the conditions to activate my technique!

[Reflect!]

The wyverns freely flew around in the air reflecting the witch's spells as they entangled her, searching for an opening. Finally, one of them lightly touched her shoulder! In an instant, the pattern for my technique appeared on Walburga's shoulder! —The time was ripe! I injected energy into my right hand, and then cried out!

"—Penetrate!"

[Penetrate!!]

The voice from my Sacred Gear was emitted loudly! Then, I increased my demonic energy to expand the mysterious space around me!

"—Bilingual!"

The technique — surrounded Walburga! Bilingual successfully worked on the witch! After that, Walburga's oppai began speaking to me about what the witch was thinking.

"After this, I'll use magic to perform elemental attacks, along with [Yamata no Orochi] to pin down the Sekiryuutei. I'll look for opportunities at the same time, where I plan to release purple flames onto the [DxD] members who are waiting at the rear."

—Ah! Although I could understand the plan that Walburga had in mind, the voice of her oppai sounded like a rough, battle-hardened Sengoku warlord[121]!? There were such oppai!? I was dealt a heavy blow! Ah, oh well, it still allowed me to understand what the witch was planning to do! I flew forwards anticipating the witch's actions, as I shot down all of her elemental magic attacks, thus stopping her attack! Walburga was highly surprised when she realised that Bilingual had been used on her!

“This can’t be real!? I’ve been hit by that weird technique!? H-How can that be, this is me!”

Also because the situation was unfavourable for her, she was dealt an even greater shock from my Bilingual! That ability was quite strange, I’m really sorry! However, as long as I used it together with Penetrate, it has been invincible against all the female opponents so far! I can anticipate all of your actions! Well, that settles this! I evaded the witch’s spells of various attributes which were even more potent than Rossweisse-san’s, or shot them down with dragon flames, and closed the distance between us in an instant! I hesitantly placed my hand on Walburga; it was a habit!

“Dress Break!”

I coolly shredded Walburga’s clothing apart! Mmm! The shape of her oppai was not very good! A small waist as well as a small butt! I finally did it to this witch! My perseverance and dedication for perversion finally bore fruit!

“Mou, you hentai dragon!”

Despite making such a complaint, even in such a situation, Walburga didn’t attempt to cover up her naked body, and continued to attack me; admire, admire! —Then, Xenovia made an announcement!

“—I’m coming, Ise. This is it!”

Xenovia said so, and then lifted up the two holy swords — although they were releasing a highly concentrated, and dense aura that they never did before, they were still very stable! Xenovia said

“Because I was unable to control Durandal’s agressive power, I temporarily used Excalibur to control it before. Furthermore, it was also to utilise the various abilities of Excalibur and practice using techniques. However, Durandal’s and my nature — was still beating within me. My original fighting style was true — but, in my blind pursuit of power, I deviated from that nature. After a detour, I re-examined myself again, and have again decided to return to my original style.”

With the sheer power of Durandal + Excalibur Destruction or

Ascalon, she previously used a dual wielding style, but after encountering an enemy who she couldn't defeat with power alone, she also began to use the various techniques and abilities of Excalibur. Although the fighting style she used before me was the same as before; increased power with dual wielding — despite this, the atmosphere surrounding her, and her manner was vastly different to before. Despite having an agressive side, the holy aura was very stable, and didn't feel dangerous at all. Xenovia overlapped the two swords to form a cross, and then shouted!

"Because of the experiences that I've had so far, I've been able to return to my origin! They have become a part of my flesh and blood so that I can successfully control Durandal! Come on Durandal, sharpen! Excalibur as well! Together with Durandal, support me by my side, and guide me so that I can advance further!"

The holy aura of Durandal and Excalibur was released! The radiant light which was released from both blades illuminated the entire space, reaching all the way up to the sky! Xenovia lifted the two holy swords which were both encased in an immense holy aura! However, a tremendous burst of fire erupted from the eight-headed evil dragon made of purple flames, attempting to obstruct Xenovia! A fireball of purple flames! Because it was supplemented by the holy aura of the holy relic, its power against a devil would cause a one-hit kill if a direct hit was taken! However, there were reassuring nakama who dealt with it!

"I won't let you do it!"

"That's right!"

Irina and Koneko-chan respectively used Hauteclere and the power of purification to offset the fireball!

<<How could I let you get away with this!>>

"Well said."

Darkness Gasper and Kiba using a dark holy-demonic sword confidently got rid of the rest of the fireballs from the front! That guy Gasper was becoming more and more like a monster!

“We’re also coming!”

“Eh!”

“Destruction is the Gremory’s area of expertise.”

The group of three onee-sans Akeno-san, Rias, Rossweisse-san each released Holy Lightning Dragons, bullets with the power of destruction, and magic projectiles, which destroyed the heads of the evil dragon one by one! When it came to destruction, we were experts! At the necks where Yamata no Orochi’s heads were destroyed, purple flames gathered, and it was about to regenerate the heads which it lost. At that time, several lines which were covered in black flames extended towards it!

“—Nice work.”

Saji! The lines which came out from the armour on his hand extended, and tied up the entire body of the evil dragon! The giant body of purple flames was gradually being eroded by the jet-black flames! The curse which could be seen with the naked eye surfaced, and had wrapped around the evil dragon’s purple flame body! Vritra’s curse was very powerful, as soon as it touched a body, it would not be easy to dispel. As the flames inflicted pain, the opponent’s strength and soul would slowly be drained, eventually reducing them to ashes. These lines could strongly attach themselves to the opponent’s body, and absorb their strength, thus people would feel awed by such an ability.

“—Xenovia-san, this is my duty as a vice-president candidate to greet and show my support for you as a candidate for the president. After this, it’s up to you.”

Saji said that to Xenovia as he made a thumbs up pose! Hearing Saji’s joke, she courageously smiled and then replied

“Ah, well, I won’t hold back then! The three of us are a sharp sword! Good, we’ll go together!”

Xenovia formed a cross with the two holy swords which had their holy aura increased, and then released her slicing attack! The torrent of aura could be described as the shape of a large cross, and it

boomed forwards! In an instant, everything that lay in its path was divided into two. Finally, the cross sliced apart the gigantic purple flamed [Yamata no Orochi]! It was quite ironic that the Holy Cross, which was a holy relic, was sliced apart by the cross generated from the wave of two holy swords — the wave which cut through the gigantic purple flamed dragon even sliced the artificial space in two, creating a large rift there. Looking into the rift, even the dimensional gap could be seen.

"—Cross Crisis, that will be its name."

Xenovia made her decision as she said that! Although it was only half a soul, to be able to take down the Holy Cross with an evil dragon, that power was quite extraordinary! However, I couldn't let Xenovia take the entire spotlight! Well, I also need to land a winning strike!

"…This can't be real, why have my purple flames been…!"

Walburga was frozen on the spot because of the impact of having her Balance Breaker cut in half by an attack! I relentlessly used the wyverns to increase my power, preparing to fire Crimson Blaster!

"…The evil dragon couldn't entirely be tied to the Holy Cross…? But, the [Chief mourner] I 13 I in my body clearly said before that it was possible…!"

Facing the speechless witch, I finished charging up energy, and launched the attack!

"Crimson Blaaaasteerrr!"

[Fang Blast Booster!!!!]

The massive red aura which was fired out from my cannon enveloped the witch—.

Notes

1. “neko” means cat, and “ane” means older sister.

2. Roland and Oliver are both the original wielders of Durandal and Hauteclere respectively, from the epic poem “The Song of Roland”. Oliver was Roland’s closest friend, advisor and confidant.

3. A long and extended battle cry. Probably something like “Yeeeaaaaaaaahhhhhhhhhh”.

4. A reference to characters from “Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland” and the mad tea party that is attended by Alice, The Hatter, Dormouse and March Hare.

5. “Speranza Bolla di Sapone” is the furigana provided for “Rainbow-coloured Hope”.

6. Ane: A term to call one’s own older sister.

7. Nakama: Comrade or companion. You’ll probably have heard this in anime a lot.

8. Jisan: Means old man.

9. Jiji: Also means old man but is a more disrespectful term.

10. Pagan Gods: Gods of another religion. In this case, those outside of Christianity.

11. Meaning to exacerbate or make things worse.

12. The Sengoku period was during the 15th to 17th century in which Japan experienced near-constant military conflict.

13. The Chief mourner here refers to the consciousness of Incinerate Anthem, as noted by its other name.

New Life

Part 1

Upon the battlefield where smoke had cleared—. The Church warriors of the rebellion who fought against us had thrown their weapons aside and surrendered honestly. At the same time, Ewald Cristaldi and Vasco Strada who were considered to be the masterminds had also surrendered.

“We have lost, there will be no resistance.”

That jisan Strada said; because he had to be interrogated, he walked towards a specific transportation magic circle. Walburga was hit…endured my Crimson Blaster without significant injuries. It looks like when she was hit by the attack, she had already created a new defensive barrier. But, because she fainted, she was tied up on the spot and transferred to a certain department of the Underworld. … Although it was discovered after Walburga was defeated…. There were purple flames which fell beside her. Ikuse Tobio-san who seemed familiar with it had to use a special lantern to collect these flames. Ikuse-san said

“This Longinus is different from the other Sacred Gears which will move on to their next host, but there are also circumstances in which it will move towards its host. Although this is that witch’s Sacred Gear, there is also the possibility that it will become someone else’s Sacred Gear afterwards. If anything, this Sacred Gear seems like it is hosted within a person’s will, and has the special ability to change

its host. Therefore, if it isn't collected, it will wander about in search of an owner."

So that's what it was. …Such a Longinus exists. So this was an independent type? W-Well, Sairaorg-san's Lion was transformed from an axe…. Vali's and my Longinus were also undergoing incredible changes. Longinus contained within them extraordinary abilities beyond ordinary Sacred Gears. However, my nakama [1][1][1] were also constantly becoming stronger…. The blades of Kiba's holy-demonic swords no longer had any shadows[1][2][1], a beautiful holy and demonic aura floated across the blade. After Xenovia went through various experiences, she reverted to her original style, and brought her usage of Durandal and Excalibur to the next level. Saji's Balance Breaker was also becoming more and more frightening, and even Shinra-senpai's Balance Breaker was quite terrifying…. Arthur who had quickly left was also a swordsman with considerable strength. If Dulio, Vali, and Sairaorg-san were included in that…. … In the case of an emergency, such a team would be able to confront a [God] class opponent without a doubt. While I was thinking about this, that jisan Strada walked up to us then stopped and took something out from his pocket.

"Firstly, I'll give this to you."

What he took out was a stack of letters. "Sister Asia, do you remember me?"[1][3][1]

Asia nodded in response to Strada who had asked.

"Yes, we had only greeted each other once."

"Hmm, you are not only a truly devout believer, yet also a gentle girl. —Please accept these."

Strada handed the letters over to Asia, and Asia received them with surprise.

"This is…?"

"They're letters of thanks from the people that you cured with your power."

“—”

Asia was lost for words. …They were letters of thanks from the time when Asia cured people as a nun. The jisan Strada continued speaking

“After you left the Church, these letters still continued to come to us.”

“…Why did you give these to me? Wouldn’t it have been better to dispose of them directly…?”

Strada pulled Asia’s hand, and smiled gently.

“…When I heard that you were going to be excommunicated, I wanted to search for where you would be as soon as possible…but, I did not make it in time. —I’m very sorry.”

These words to Asia — made her well up with tears. Jisan — always wanted to save Asia…!

“…I…that…!”

“I hope that you’ll write back to the people who sent these letters, or go to ask them how they are. —I have already arranged for that. If you want to meet them, you just need to let the Church know.”

Strada stroked Asia’s head as she was crying emotionally, and Asia tried not to make any noise as she cried. I see, what Asia did in the Church to save those lives — it wasn’t in vain! Even just knowing this, I was glad! That jisan spoke to Azazel-sensei who arrived here after the battle next.

“Former Governor-dono[141]. It looks like those traitors who has been following us have showed up as well.”

“Ah, thank you.”

I was surprised at the conversation of these two people. Watching from behind, sensei explained from the beginning.

“We knew from the beginning that that bastard Rizevim was the one who incited this rebellion. This also shows that there were traitors

within the Church who colluded with that guy. So that's why we wanted them to show up in the fight against the rebellion group. Sure enough, Walburga entered this field right? That is to say, the traitors told those guys about the magic circle technique to enter this field. We had anticipated that, made preparations, and could already narrow down who the traitor was."

Judging by the situation, it seemed like the traitor had already been caught. Strada said

"Bringing the rebellion group to this place was also to draw out this person. It was trouble for the former Fallen Angel Governor-dono though."

Well, sensei just said that jisan Strada and the others came to bear the responsibility as the masterminds behind the rebellion with one of the reasons being to lure out the traitor…. Well, when there were shady things going on internally, ending the rebellion wouldn't guarantee that there wouldn't be a second rebellion. Between sensei and Strada, there were things that they understood without having to speak about it face to face. Sensei nodded.

"No worries. Well, it was also an opportunity for these young people to fight. But it was also a way to try out Rossweisse's barrier and sealing technique."

Rossweisse-san smiled proudly.

"Naturally, it was good that the intruders were caught in one fell swoop, but it's also fortunate that the field didn't continue to be destroyed."

According to what she said, this field's structure was incredibly sturdy, thanks to which, even after our large battle, it could still remain here without collapsing. …Although it was still being researched, Rossweisse-san's sealing and barrier technique let sensei know about its issues. The evil dragons which were captured after they had their abilities stopped, also for the purposes of research or experimentation, were sent to various organisations. — At that time, Strada fumbled with something in his pockets again, and took out a small vial.

“Former Governor Azazel-dono, there is something that I wish to give you. This is one of the things to compensate for the trouble this time. It wouldn’t hurt to keep it.”

Sensei received the small vial. Inside…was something like a shard of pottery. Sensei’s eyes widened in surprise when he saw it, and then murmured

“…Ah, indeed, it’s this.”

“Sensei, what is that?”

After I asked my question, sensei replied

“…It’s a fragment of the Holy Grail. It’s the real thing.”

“—!?”

This information caught all the members of [DxD] by surprise! Eh, of course we would be surprised by it! He actually said it was a real fragment of the Holy Grail! Was that really true!? Sensei seemed to confirm his own thoughts by asking Strada

“That is the case isn’t it, Strada?”

Strada silently nodded. Strada then turned to look at Rias and Kiba.

“There is also Rias Gremory’s [Knight]. —Isaiah, I heard you were called that by your nakama while you were in the facility.”

After hearing that name, Kiba was extremely shocked.

“—. …Why would you know that?”

Isaiah…. It was Kiba’s name when he was in the facility? That guy, he actually never told us about that. Strada continued

“After many repeated experiments, there were many children who could not return; mainly because they lost their lives that they couldn’t return. —There was only one exception. Tosca; do you have any memory of that name?”

Kiba was taken aback, his eyes widened. Then, he could not help nodding. Strada turned his eyes towards his subordinates. Then, a

young girl emerged from a group of warriors. It was a girl around twelve to thirteen with white hair tied into twin tails. As soon as she saw Kiba, she frantically covered her mouth, and tried to hold back the tears which were gushing out from her eyes.

“…Isaiah?”

The girl asked that question. Kiba was in shock as tears streamed down his cheeks.

“……! I-Is, h-how would…! You’re Tosca…?”

“…Mmm.”

Strada said to the speechless Kiba and us

“Only this one girl with a strong barrier type Sacred Gear survived. It was discovered after the experiment, and Valper was unable to do anything. Although the user was in a state of suspended animation, it wasn’t possible to be released, and researchers had no choice but to place her into a deep hidden chamber within the facility. And she herself, when Valper was expelled, was found during a search of the facility, but we also were unable to release the barrier. However, after the alliance, we were finally able to release that barrier by using the Fallen Angels’ technology.”

…Still alive! One of Kiba’s comrades was still alive! And that person was actually recovered by the people of the Church! Strada said

“Because she was held in a state of suspended animation whilst inside the barrier, her body’s growth stopped, and it looked like she was very weak. Thus, bringing her to this country took some time.”

The girl walked to Kiba’s side, and then extended her hand out to caress his cheek.

“Isaiah, you’ve already grown up…. …We were clearly the same back then.”

The girl stood on her tiptoes to look at Kiba. Kiba held her hand which was stroking his cheek, and shook his head tearfully.

“…It’s okay, it’s okay…. …This is fine.”

After reuniting after such a long time, they hugged each other—. “It’s too good. Isaiah is alive and well.”

“—. ……Ah, I see…. That explains it…. You, you guys, I…alive… being alive is everything….”

……. …Neither I nor my nakama who were lost for words, could do anything but shed tears for their reunion. …Kiba, it’s truly great. What you’ve lived for until now, it exists! Because you’ve lived until now, you were able to see this girl again! That’s right, you should celebrate for being alive as long as you can! It’ll be enough as long as you can continue to live happily! Because those children never thought about revenge! That jisan Strada said as he watched that scene unfold

“Take this child with you. If she’s kept with the Church, there might be people who would want to take advantage of her.”

Kiba said as he was hugging the girl

“Your Eminence Strada…I…”

Strada shook his head.

“You don’t need to forgive me, Knight. If you forgive me, it’ll make your blade dull. Let the space between the holy and demonic become the source of your power.”

“…Your Eminence Strada.”

That jisan Strada also touched Xenovia’s head.

“Warrior Xenovia. Your fight alongside Sekiryuutei-kid…was very elegant. —Love, maiden Xenovia. Durandal also seems to be more forgiving because there is love.”

After saying that, Strada walked towards the transportation magic circle because he had to be interrogated. I—called out to the jisan and asked

“Wait a minute…you, the first thing you did was give Asia those letters, and then there’s Kiba’s comrade, as well as the fragment of the Holy Grail; did you prepare all of this before the battle started?”

Strada remained silent. He simply revealed a smile on his wrinkled face, and then lifted his right fist into the air. I could only watch that jisan's tall back — it faded into the receding light of the magic circle. Vasco Strada—. The father of the Church warriors—. Asia, Kiba, and Xenovia were people who were distressed as they found themselves caught between the Church and themselves. The Cardinal who embodied power appeared to give them an answer—. He was truly a great man—.

Part 2

A few days after that battle—. It was the day after Ravel left for the Underworld. It was finally the day where the candidates in the Student Council Election would give their speeches! After all the teachers and students of the school were gathered in the gym, they would listen to the candidates' final speeches before voting. This would be the most crucial moment for Xenovia. As the candidates spoke one after another, Saji, who was running for Vice-President stepped onto the stage.

"That, my reason for running to be the Vice-President of the Student Council is—"

Saji spoke about reasonable things through the microphone. Well, it was really down to earth stuff that he would talk about. The response from the students was alright.

"Yo, we're looking forward to the star of the sports clubs!"

Although there was the sound of some booing, there was some laughter, but it was still a commendable speech overall.

"—To sum up, while I am continuing the policies of the former President, I plan to operate the Student Council in a flexible way. Those of the sports clubs, especially the boys! Even if you vote for me, if you don't properly listen to what I say, I'll be very troubled; after I'm elected, please listen to at least two thirds of what I say."

The sound of laughter from the students continued until the end, and Saji's speech concluded. Oh, the students' response was good. With that, it should ensure his votes.

"Next up, the speeches from the candidates for Student Council President. Hanakai-san, if you please."

Hanakai-san got up from the chair on the stage when she was called, and stood before the microphone. Hanakai-san spoke with a quiet voice.

"The reason why I am running for Student Council President is — I've always been watching and following Sona-senpai's model closely, while succeeding the former President's will, at the same time, I want to build a new Kuoh Academy together with everyone."

Her speech was rational, and straight to the point, which allowed the students to easily understand its meaning. Hanakai-san candidly recounted her thoughts and experiences when she was closely watching Sona-zenkaichou, and with the attitude and expression in her eyes that the next Student Council should have, she clearly and concisely described her new vision for Kuoh Academy to the students. It was an interesting speech which made the students feel Hanakai-san's sincerity towards the Student Council.

"—The person who was just described, the concept that the new Kuoh Academy Student Council should be was raised by Hanakai. Please give her a round of applause."

Many students applauded. …Everyone was quietly listening to her speech…. If this continued, all of the votes would go to Hanakai-san! Then, the last person to get up from their seat on the stage was—.

"Finally, it's Xenovia-san who is also running for Student Council President. Please begin your speech."

It was Xenovia! It was also the finale! Woah, I was feeling nervous even before she was in front of the microphone!

"Xenovia-chan, you'll be fine!"

"I-I'll still cast a vote for Xenovia-san even if she doesn't do well in

her speech!”

Sitting on my left and right, Matsuda and Motohama were shrouded with tension as her fans. …In fact, last night, I let Xenovia practice her speech with me. The content was perfect. Asia, Irina, and Kiryuu also helped her, making a summary of her main points; the content was beautiful and the speech was easy to understand. —But, it felt as though it wasn’t Xenovia’s style of writing. If it was her…it should be more in line with her, and it would be good if it only had what Xenovia would say. Although I thought that, I was still waiting for Xenovia to stand before the microphone. Finally, Xenovia stood before the microphone, and looked at the entire school. She then took her speech out, and was about to begin. —But, as soon as she opened her mouth, Xenovia plunged into a brief moment of thought. Following that, she put her speech back into her pocket. Then, after adjusting her breathing, Xenovia began her speech.

“…Before this age, I was someone with little knowledge of the world who was brought up in a Church-related facility. Before I came to this school, I didn’t have the chance to apply the word ‘student’ to myself. In terms of my education of this country, I have about ten years’ worth of time, not in school, but receiving education in the Church.”

The sudden speech caused the students to make a commotion, but even so, Xenovia continued speaking.

“I’m running Student Council President because my life in this school was very happy. I attended school for the first time since I was born. Here, I never felt bored. The various subjects were good, engaging with classmates during break was also fun, the activities of the Occult Research Club were also fun, sports and cultural activities were also fun, the school trip to Kyoto was also great; all of it was very fresh, and I felt joy from the bottom of my heart. Although my way of expressing this isn’t very good, I think I like this kind of school the most. I like it so much that I ponder every time — is it really alright for such an interesting place to exist in the world? Also, I want to say a heartfelt thank you to all the students in this school who helped me. For taking good care of me even though I was ignorant of school life and many worldly things, thank you so much. Thus, the

reason why I wanted to run for Student Council President is for this school, as well as a form of gratitude to be able to attend this school with everyone."

That could be said to be a speech that was totally not for someone running to the Student Council President, rather, it was simply like someone's personal feelings towards the school. Nonetheless, all of the students were listening intently. There was not a single person who looked down on or even ignored Xenovia.

"I want to leave something behind at this school. Being the first school that I attended since I was born, my first experience of school life, the place which has given me something precious, I want to leave behind proof that I was once here. After becoming the Student Council President, for this school, for everyone in this school, perhaps this is a rather simple idea, but I came to this very naturally. I will become a Student Council President with a different style to the former President, and it will also feel as though there are many things which are not done as well. However, if you think so, then don't hesitate to complain to me about it, and vent your dissatisfaction. I will do my best to respond to it! If there are any problems, I hope that you'll be able to trust me! I will definitely try to help you! I will definitely use my position as Student Council President to protect everyone in this school! In the past year, this school and its students have given me ten years' worth of happiness as I was unable to attend school previously. Because of this, in the space of my remaining year, I want to do my best to protect this school, and protect the students that I am grateful to! I want to create a Kuoh Academy that will be loved by everyone!"

Everyone understood that it was a heartfelt speech with all her effort. Seeing Xenovia who tried her best to convey her deepest thoughts through the microphone, everyone was able to understand that they were her genuine thoughts—. Finally, Xenovia said with a wide smile

"Everyone, make this become a happy Kuoh Academy. No, I'll do it. So, I'd like everyone to please take care of me."

An intense wave of cheering and applause erupted — reverberating

in front of Xenovia who was bowing.

“Wooooooohhhhhhhh!”

“Xenovia-chan! That was amazing!”

“So reliable, Xenovia-san!”

“So cool, Xenovia-senpai!”

“I’m voting for you! Yeah!!”

The sound of cheers rang out unlike before. Even when the teachers reminded everyone “Quiet! Quiet”, the students’ excitement did not drop! Hanakai-san previously spoke about her love for the Student Council. But, in contrast, Xenovia — spoke about her love for the students and the school. I thought that that was the most notable part of their speeches. Looking closely, whether it was Asia or Irina, or even Kiryuu — they were shedding tears as they offered their applause.

After the speeches ended, and the voting also ended, I saw someone familiar as I was on my way to leave the gym. After catching up to them — I realised that it was Sister Griselda. She had been using a handkerchief to wipe her eyes, and seemed to have noticed me approaching.

“…Griselda-san, you also came.”

“…Hmm, I’m older yet still immature, I actually cried because of that child’s speech…. I really am weak when it comes to tears.”

Although Griselda-san’s cheeks were wet from her tears, she still continued

“…Even the [Slashing Princess] who would raise her sword against anyone actually revealed such a bright smile…”

“It was a wonderful speech.”

After I expressed my thoughts wholeheartedly, the sister smiled proudly.

“—Because she’s the [imouto][15] that I’m proud of.”

The person who appeared then was Xenovia.

“Oh, Ise. Sister Griselda as well! You came!”

“Wouldn’t it be a problem if you leave the gym?”

After I asked, Xenovia cheerfully replied with

“I came to get some fresh air.”

Xenovia grabbed my arm as she replied, and then said to Sister Griselda

“Yes, exactly! I’ll take this opportunity to tell you directly! Sister, I also want to use the room that Irina got from Michael, what do you think?”

—! T-This giiirrll! After giving such a wonderful speech, she actually said something like this! And this sister — her emotional state immediately changed. With her temples throbbing, she revealed an oppressive smile, and used both her hands to pinch Xenovia’s cheeks.

“…You child! Return my excitement!”

“…Ahh ouch, no, but, I think that I should let sister [as my sister] know…”

“You really are a disastrous [imouto]!”

Hahaha, what should I say, it really suits Xenovia’s style. Since that day, Xenovia used — Quarta as her surname. It showed once again that Griselda-san really considered her to be her [imouto], while it also showed again that Xenovia treated her as her [ane][16]. Then, the results of the Student Council election were announced at a later date—. Aside from the position of Student Council President, most of the other positions could be predicted by their speeches, but the dramatic competition for President was decided only by a narrow margin. After knowing the outcome of the results, Hanakai-san said with a smile —

“I think this is good. Because this is just like Kuoh Academy.”

New members of the Kuoh Academy Student Council

Student Council President	Xenovia Quarta (second year)
Vice-President	Saji Genshirou (second year)
Secretary	Meguri Tomoe (second year), Kamo Tadami (second year), Nakiri Ouryuu (first year)
Treasurer	Kusaka Reya (second year), Nimura Ruroko (first year), Miraka Vordenburg (first year)

Notes

1. Nakama: Close friends, comrades or companions.
2. Both literally and figuratively here.
3. Strada continually addresses Asia with a very respectful tone/manner.
4. –dono is used as an honorific to indicate respect towards an individual.
5. Imouto: Younger sister.
6. Ane: Older sister.

To be continued...

This is what happened on the day of the party to celebrate Xenovia becoming the Student Council President. That day, after the commotion of the party mostly subsided, Azazel-sensei gathered everyone of the Occult Research Club in the lab. Sensei just briefly explained the reason why he called us to the lab…but it was really shocking news! Deep inside the lab, after passing through several stringently arranged doors, we arrived before a rather isolated intensive care room. Through the glass, we could see Valerie Tepes who was connected to numerous machines. Because the Holy Grail which was taken by Qlippoth had not been returned to her, she was in a state where she couldn't wake up. The two people who entered the intensive care room were — Gasper and Azazel-sensei. Gasper who went to Valerie's side gently stroked his benefactor's hair. Apparently Gasper came here every two days, telling her what had happened every day while she was still asleep. Those two people who rarely saw each other…were clearly in front of each other, yet felt so far away; that guy always had a lonesome expression when he spoke to her. After Azazel-sensei placed his briefcase onto the table and opened it, he took something out of it. It was a necklace with some kind of fragment in the centre—. That fragment — was the fragment of the Holy Grail which was obtained from Vasco Strada a few days ago. So the reason why sensei called us here today was…to use the fragment of the real Holy Grail so that Valerie could awaken! When we heard about this news earlier, we were all really surprised! The fragment of the Holy Grail which we got from that muscular jisan could actually do this…. The Grigori was able to make a necklace using that fragment. Sensei walked over to Valerie who was lying on the bed with it. Through a set of speakers, we were able to hear the conversation inside the room.

"…Can Valerie really wake up with that?"

Gasper asked sensei with moist eyes. Sensei revealed a gentle smile and said

"Ah, I said before that this was insufficient to replace the Holy Grail within this girl's body. This is a necklace made from a genuine

fragment of the Holy Grail, so if it's worn by her, then perhaps—"

Sensei quietly placed the necklace around Valerie's neck. After silently observing for a while—.

"……Uh."

A noise was emitted from Valerie's mouth! After continuing to observe for a while, albeit slowly, her eyes were gradually opening! The lights made Valerie who was looking up at the ceiling feel uncomfortable for a moment.

"…Uh…Ahh…huh…?"

It seemed like she was conscious. Gasper's face approached hers. His face — had already been crying. Even so, Gasper still tried to smile and asked Valerie

"…Valerie. Do you know, it's me?"

Facing Gasper who was holding her hand, Valerie smiled.

"……Ara, if this isn't Gasper. Good morning."

That blank tone — was exactly the same as Valerie Tepe's when we met her in the Vampire's country.

"Valerie…Valerie…!"

Gasper, who couldn't control his emotions, kept on shouting Valerie's name as he cried on her chest. He probably wanted to see her again, and probably wanted to talk to her again. This was because when we rescued her, she — was already unconscious. Valerie gently patted Gasper who was crying on her chest.

"Ufufu, it really is Gasper! What is it? Such a crybaby."

…I…could only shed tears as I watched them. But, it was great! It really was great! I didn't think that it was actually possible to wake her up in this way! Looking closely, all of us were crying as we watched Gasper and Valerie's reunion. Ah, that's right! It really is too good, Gya-suke! There was no longer anyone who could hinder these two now! Not possible! If there was someone like that, I,

Gasper, and everyone definitely wouldn't forgive them! Sensei heaved a sigh of relief as he watched those two.

"This really was a serious gamble. As an emergency measure, isn't it good that it went well?"

Sensei said to Gasper as he lifted his head.

"Listen carefully, Gasper. There is one thing that you have to keep in mind. Firstly, she always has to wear this necklace. I can't guarantee what will happen if she goes outside. Also, as long as we haven't recovered Valerie's Holy Grail which is in Qlippoth's hands, she can't go outside. After this, the area immediately around the Hyoudou household — the apartments that you and Kiba live in are also included in this area, will have a special barrier. That is to say, as long as she's wearing the necklace, she'll be fine as long as she doesn't leave this area."

I see, so this awakening was just a temporary measure; if her original Holy Grail isn't returned to her, she won't be able to obtain true freedom. So that's why a special barrier had to be erected around my house to allow her to safely move about. Rias spoke to

sensei who was in the treatment room through the glass.

“…His Eminence Strada, while losing the challenge, he gave us a lot of useful things.”

“That’s what that man is like. He’ll find a reason just to give that to us. He’s the type that uses his fists to communicate. He got rid of the rebellion’s dissatisfaction, and at the same time, didn’t forget to think about us. That’s the kind of man he is.”

…No matter whether it was Asia, Kiba, Xenovia, or even Gasper; they were all saved by that jisan Strada’s consideration. That jisan… had prepared all of that before he even stood before us. Sensei said

“…I guess it could be thought of as insurance.”

“Insurance?”

Hearing my question, sensei continued.

“In the worst case scenario where it isn’t possible for us to recover Valerie’s Holy Grail from those guys, we also have the option of destroying it. …If the Holy Grail was being abused by those guys”

Well, that is to say, the possibility of that also exists. Although I wanted to retrieve it, if it became a situation where it was only possible to choose either the world or the Holy Grail…. I was filled with the desire to return it, and if it became possible, I would risk my life for it. However, it wasn’t surprising that there were people who were worried about the worst possible scenario. Sensei muttered

“However, in the hands of those guys, they’ll probably use Valerie’s Holy Grail like a shield. That guy Strada, he clearly knew about the enemy’s approach, but he’s also able to understand our side when things like this happen.”

Shield, huh. Ah, that bastard Rizevim would probably do something like that happily. In other words, that jisan Strada thought about this a while ago.

“The higher ups of the Church provided the fragment of the Holy Grail to reduce our hesitation in the scenario where we would

confront Rizevim but he would use Valerie's Holy Grail as a shield."

—Rias said.

"Ah, that's right, Rias. It would dampen the resolve of the members of [DxD]; it could be said that Strada and the Church thought that a single fragment of a Holy Relic, the Holy Grail was rather inexpensive in comparison. Well, in the event that you guys who are at the forefront have to face Valerie's Holy Grail which is used as a shield, the Holy Grail is of no significance if the world is destroyed."

Compared to fighting against Qlippoth on the front lines for the various mythologies, a fragment of the real Holy Grail could be said to be a cheap price to ease our concerns.

"It's best to reduce our worries as much as possible. To be honest, this is a great benefit for us psychologically."

Rossweisse-san felt impressed by that jisan Strada's actions.

"Regardless of whether it was Yuuto-senpai's comrade, or this fragment of the Holy Grail, they were handed to us through that rebellion. To apologise for causing this rebellion in this way…"

Koneko-chan's words made Kiba close his eyes.

"…In order to give these to us, he intentionally took on the responsibility for it. Although it was an aggressive approach, when Trihexa's revival becomes a threat, coupled with Rizevim's schemes, this would certainly be a good thing…"

"Regardless of whether it was the fragment of the Holy Grail, or the survivor of the [Holy Sword Project], they were secrets within the Church. It's definitely not something which comes free to us. That's because of their long battle against Devils and Fallen Angels. Using the unrest within the Church to give us these. —Strada is a tough guy to deal with."

Although sensei spoke in a reluctant tone, there was a sense of admiration in it. Because a precious fragment of the real Holy Grail was given to Devils and Vampires who are their enemies, complex situations and feelings would arise within the Church, but even so,

there was nothing that could be done about their dissatisfaction. It seemed that after being questioned, that jisan Strada was imprisoned along with Ewald Cristaldi. …Without any excuses, he willingly took responsibility for it. They claimed that there was little room for consideration between the higher ups of the Three Factions, hence the rebellion was not entirely useless. …However, they still had to bear some punishment…. I shook my head, and changed my mood.

“Well, even so, I’m still filled with the desire to get Valerie’s Holy Grail back.”

I firmly declared. Of course, what was stolen definitely had to be returned. Regarding this, [of course] everyone unanimously agreed. Sensei suddenly asked Kiba

“—Say, Kiba. How is the comrade that you just reunited with?”

He was talking about Tosca-san. Kiba said shyly

“E-Eh! Ba…basically, after we told her about what’s happened these past few years, and also about Kuoh town, I introduced her to everyone. I feel like there are a lot of things she doesn’t understand, so she will need me and everyone to teach her various things next.”

Yes, going between the apartments that Kiba lived in and the Hyoudou household, Tosca-san began to learn about various things. As she had never left the Church’s facilities, there were many culture shocks for her, so Asia and Xenovia who had similar experiences were helping her. It seemed like her top priority was to learn Japanese first. When Kiba spoke — as if possessed by something, he seemed to have a gentle expression. …To become a sheath to this guy that I’ve always been concerned about. Kiba had said that he was determined to protect her forever. For it to become like this, I’m worried for Shinra-senpai…. But Shinra-senpai didn’t seem to have given up.

“Yes, a very powerful rival! Anyway, I also need to win over Hyoudou-kun!”

—She was in high spirits. I’m also counted as a rival!? Seriously,

please give me a break, Shinra-senpai! Sensei suddenly confessed

“…Phew, somehow my worries are disappearing one by one on their own. After that, I’m just waiting for you guys to grow and defeat Qlippoth.”

Sensei’s words were full of expectations! Please wait a little longer for that! That side had gathered formidable enemies, so just preparing for that would take a lot of effort! —Suddenly, Akeno-san seemed to have been contacted by someone, so she created a magic circle on the floor for communication. Projected out from it was Sona-zenkaichou.

“Rias, is it convenient for you at the moment?”

Her expression was rather tense.

“What is it, Sona? For you to contact me so urgently…”

“It’s about Raiser Phoenix’s game…”

“Come to think of it, it’s not surprising for the results to be released around this time.”

Yes, we had already been contacted by Ravel to tell us that Raiser’s game would be today. But, the tension on Sona-zenkaichou’s expression intensified.

“……”

“…Sona?”

To Rias who asked in surprise, Sona-zenkaichou broke the silence.

“Raiser Phoenix and Ravel-san—”

That sentence carried with it a dreadful sense of foreboding—.

Top Secret

Watching the video recording after the incident, only a handful of people saw this top secret. This was Diehauser Belial's rating game. The video of the <<The Champion of 10 Rounds>> was recorded. It happened in the third round. Diehauser Belial's opponent was the third son of the Phoenix family — Raiser Phoenix. The location of the battle was an ancient ruin deep underground. Some parts of the video were shaky and unclear, so please forgive me. After 30 minutes into the rating game, the peerages had been mostly defeated, thus Raiser Phoenix decided to enter the outskirts of the ruins, a dome shaped cavern. Because ordinary cameras were not able to capture the entire area, this camera was not used for the audience, but was a hidden camera for monitoring. Raiser Phoenix entered the cave with his sister, the bishop Ravel Phoenix. Upon reaching the centre of the cave, and entering the open space, they waited for Champion Diehauser Belial. After encountering Belial, he said

"Diehauser-dono, I sincerely thank you for showing us a good game, the only member of my peerage left is the [Bishop] who my sister is. My defeat is inevitable. Although somewhat presumptuous, I want to have a one on one match against kings here."

Raiser had a fearless expression.

"Onii-sama, you think the same way as Ise-sama. It looks like he had some influence on you."

"Shh, be quiet! A battle of kings against each other will make the audience excited! A little bit of fan service!"

"Fine, whatever."

Ordinary conversation between siblings. But, the Champion smiled deeply.

"An exciting match…eh. Raiser Phoenix-dono, an exciting match… what do you mean?"

Raiser made a surprised expression. The Champion continued

“From start to finish, using clever tactics to overwhelm opponents, or a last-minute comeback victory, or going all out against each other. I…think that in my time of the games, I’ve experienced all of them.”

The Champion shook his head.

“…No, that’s a lie. I, aside from when I’ve been pressured, I’ve won in the way that I intended it to be. If you want to know what a reversal and equal fight is, it’s something that I intentionally allow the game to develop into.”

Raiser was confused.

“Diehauser-dono, what are you actually trying to say?”

“…Raiser-dono, I have not lost since I was born. I’ve done everything. I’ve achieved everything. I have never seen defeat in a rating game.”

“Diehauser-dono, I don’t know what your intention is…. But, please allow me to ask one thing. Why are you telling me this? Do you need to confide your feelings with me in this game?”

“…Unsophisticated, I want to say. No, it really lacks style. For the players to speak of unnecessary things in these sacred games; they should be saying nothing but insults at each other. I’m currently doing this as the Champion; what an awful Champion.”

The Champion shook his head. His entire body released a mass of energy. The Champion’s hand extended in front of him as he was ready to release an enormous amount of demonic energy. Sensing something, Ravel Phoenix stood in front to protect her brother, who was the [King].

“Onii-sama! Get out of here quickly! This person’s attack—”

A spear of demonic energy suddenly appeared from the side and pierced through Ravel Phoenix’s abdomen. The demonic energy in the Champion’s hands looked like it was just a feint. Ravel Phoenix who had received a fatal injury was bleeding from her abdomen. But, the game’s emergency retiring mechanism when someone received a fatal injury did not activate. The Phoenix’s special ability didn’t

respond, and his sister was simply lying flat on the ground; Raiser held her up.

“Ravel?”

He called her name but there was no response, and she remained still. The Champion shook his head.

“…Even if she is invulnerable, against my [Worthless] ability, it looks like it’s useless. There is also a special barrier within this cave. Transportation will not occur, and the events which occur in here won’t be transmitted to the outside.”

The Belial family’s special ability is [Worthless], and as its name implies, it will turn the opponent’s special ability into something worthless for a short period of time. In this case, the Phoenix family’s special ability [Immortality] became worthless, so Ravel Phoenix’s regeneration was cancelled. In addition, at this time, just as the Champion said, the cave had a strange barrier. But at the time, no one was aware that the current situation was abnormal.

“……”

Raiser was silent. Anger was causing his body to tremble.

“…Damn it. Damn it, Diehaaauuusserrrrrrrr!!!!!”

The Champion expressionlessly looked at Raiser who was shouting angrily. The Champion said to Raiser

“Raiser Phoenix-dono, don’t you think it’s strange? Why in the [Evil Pieces], [—-] of [————]? Eight pawns, two knights, bishops rooks and also a queen. Originally there should have been [—-], the pieces were given something [———] instead.”

The Champion took something out of his pocket. Because it was confidential, a part of it was blurred out. The thing that the Champion took out had been edited. That matter is confidential.

“—That is!”

The Champion showed the questioning Raiser the object in his hand as he said

“—[—-] of [—-], [Evil Pieces], the Maou who made them, Ajuka Beelzebub, not me. Yet he created them. The method to produce them was destroyed after they were made. This [—-] rumour is not unheard of. Urban legends, rumours like [—-] of [———] are rather famous amongst the Devils who like to gossip. Among my cousins, there is one who is very fond of rumours, the gossiping type of girl. By chance, that cousin had her territory in Japan’s [————], she found the reclusive Ajuka Beelzebub-sama in the vicinity by accident. So she—”

The audio here is edited as it is highly confidential. After ‘So she’, the audio had been modified greatly.

“There is only one of [———]. People who were given it, they could do things like [————] and [————]. So they [————] and [————]. Ajuka Beelzebub-sama is simply too extraordinary.”

“What do you intend to do with that?”

Raiser asked.

“You don’t need to know.”

The Champion released demonic energy towards Raiser. The video here is unclear, and the image could not be recognised for several seconds. When the scene was visible again, Raiser and Ravel Phoenix were both lying on the ground. Both of them were completely motionless. At this time, a change occurred within the cave. Accompanied by a teal coloured glow, a magic circle appeared. An enormous creature emerged from the magic circle. After witnessing this, the Champion exclaimed in admiration

“—I have heard the rumours. When unpredictable events occur in a rating game, or when a game is played maliciously, there will be a corresponding response undertaken secretly.”

<< That’s surprising for you to say. Did you specifically call me out here? >>

The large creature with pale blue scales — the dragon asked the Champion.

“—The Dragon Queen with celestial blue scales, the Chaos Karma Dragon, Tiamat. The referee behind the rating games, and also one of the real administrators…”

Within the rules or special competitions of the rating games, when the worst imaginable situation occurs, certain emergency measures will be activated. For example, if players are forced to retire by transportation, but are unsuccessful, the referees will intervene in the game as a special case to handle the event. Starting from about one hundred and fifty years ago, that role was taken up by one of the five Dragon Kings — the Chaos Karma Dragon Tiamat. However, situations such as these are extremely rare, and it has only occurred twice in the past. The dragon Tiamat entered an offensive stance against the Champion.

<< Don’t blame me. I’m doing this according to my agreement with Ajuka Beelzebub, to correct the abnormalities of the games. >>

“Known as the strongest of the Dragon Kings, that is rather commendable.”

<< Silence, this is only my gratitude towards Ajuka. I don’t serve anyone and I don’t take orders from anyone. >>

“Exactly. She is one of the various people who have an important position in my games, Champion Belial-dono.”

A third person’s voice resounded within the cave as light from a transportation magic circle glowed. The person who came forth from the magic circle was the Maou Ajuka Beelzebub. Tiamat spoke with a tone of surprise towards Ajuka

<< —You also came directly here. It seems that this is a rather serious matter. >>

“Well, this isn’t something that we can let Sirzechs or that old man of Bael see.”

The Champion greeted him

“I’m honoured to be able to meet you. Transcender — Maou Ajuka-sama. I understand your reason for coming here, Ajuka-sama, that is

__”

Halfway through Diehauser Belial’s sentence, in the instant that Ajuka Beelzebub opened his mouth, the video suddenly ended. Yes, the video broke off there.

Afterword

Hi everyone, I'm Ishibumi. As agreed, the fourth chapter is about Ravel → Gasper → Rossweisse → Irina → and Xenovia as the heroine (+α). I was finally able to have an in-depth description of the group. I was wondering if she would be able to take on the role of the heroine. I'm sorry that a character which was introduced a few years ago has taken a few years to develop. I sincerely thank the fans who have stayed on til now from the bottom of my heart. Anyway, I'll move onto the commentary of volume nineteen now.

About Xenovia

I hesitated on whether to make her cute or cool. But I thought that I would go with the latter. Not only was she running as a candidate for the Student Council President, she also surpassed the previous wielder of Durandal, so this was the solution to her own style. I'm very happy to be able to write about her relationship with Griselda. My editor also praised the relationship between those two who are like sisters. But one of the most difficult parts was on where to insert their dialogue. Similar to life, it needed to have Xenovia's style of speech, which I thought about for a long time, but it wasn't like a politician's election so I wrote something which would suit her style. But what happens after Xenovia becomes the President of the new Student Council; even the author himself is quite excited by imagining it.

Kiba, Gasper and Dulio

Holding dark expressions and being troubled before the final were the two people Kiba and Gasper. Doing something like that without a break first in the climax, I was a bit worried as the author. Both of these people have had a certain relationship with the Church, so there was a settlement by using His Eminence Strada. The boys of the Gremory household need to be protected by girls. And then Dulio. Like last time, he was on the front lines as the leader. He's a guy who is more naïve than Issei. I always thought that his character went well with soap bubbles, so I tried to make one of his skills together with his character.

The two giants of the Church

This time, three of the Church's leaders debuted, but within those, Ewald Cristaldi and Vasco Strada perhaps felt too powerful. This volume brought up the topic of the holy swords, so naturally, the wielders of Excalibur and Durandal also had to be mentioned. The two wielders of those holy swords appeared here. The topic this time was to put Team [DxD] against a topic as serious/heavy as humanity, but because it was so serious, it didn't suit the story of this work, thus it was changed to [Challenge from the incredible previous holy sword wielders] which was simple and easy to understand. Afterwards, the character/role of His Eminence Strada was naturally formed. The sentence [Chikara is power] reflects that old man very well. If Cristaldi and Strada were actually using the original holy-swords...or if they were in their primes, then... I guess a reckless plot was possible because they were just a guest character.

The truth is, since this volume was centred around the Church, I originally had an idea to have Freed resurrected by the use of the Holy Grail and had him merge with a Evil Dragon in order to cause destruction. But since he left the story smoothly already, I had him stay that way without touching him.

About Top Secret

This volume's last chapter about the monitoring of the game used a video recording…and as everyone saw, it contained a lot of secrets. The last Dragon King Tiamat finally appeared. What will happen to Ravel and Raiser in the end? Diehauser's lines, and Ajuka's

appearance is also a hint, so you can enjoy imagining what will happen while you wait for the next book to come out.

Next time's fourth chapter will also be the climax, with the final battle beginning. The hints/foreshadowing so far, the remaining formidable enemies, and the legendary evil dragons will all appear, so please stay tuned. As the content will be related to Rizevim, Vali will become the male protagonist of next volume. However, the previous volume about Heaven, and this volume about the Church's warriors was originally supposed to be in the fifth to seventh volumes after the alliance of the Three Factions in volume four, but now 18 and 19 have come out….

Here, I thank everyone who has always taken care of me. Miyama Zero, editor H. Perhaps because of the impact of increased workload, it's always night time when I finish writing so I give you trouble every time. I sincerely apologise to all the relevant personnel. After this, I will work hard with writing.

Now then, we will finally enter the 20th volume in the next volume--but before that, a new series, 'High School DxD DX', will commence! This series will be a compilation of only the DxD short stories and it was finally separated thanks to the support of all of you, the fans. So the plan from now is to have DxD continue in the form of the main story and the DX (compilation of short story). With this, uncompiled short stories may reduce quite a lot. If there are short stories which you would like to see published, then please send your opinion to the editorial department since it would be a good example.

Regarding the DX volume 1 which all of you are curious about. It will include the Onsen trip story (mixed bath with Grayfia) as the main focus as well as the story which first introduced Sister Griselda and originally written story. Since the main story will enter the climax and will become serious, it would be great if you will read the DX volume which is a combination of the romance-comedy and the daily lives in order to balance it out.

That's how it is, so it will be great if you can support the High School DxD main story and the DX volumes.

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19

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総選挙のデュランダル

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